A DISCOURSE OF Things ABOVE REASON.

INQUIRING

Whether a Philoſopher ſhould admit there are any ſuch.

By a Fellow of the Royal Society.

To which are annexed by the Publiſher (for the Affinity of the Subjects)

Some

ADVICES

About judging of Things ſaid to Tranſcend REASON.

WRITTEN

By a Fellow of the ſame Society.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

An Advertiſement.

THe *Later of the two following Dialogues is but a part of a Diſcourſe, conſiſting of ſome Conferences, whereof,* that *was neither the Firſt, nor the Laſt. This 'twas thought fit the Reader ſhould have notice of, that he may the more eaſily gueſs upon what account it is, that ſome Clauſes in the firſt Page, (and perhaps a few other Paſſages elſewhere) contain ſomewhat that appears not altogether the ſame it would have done, if there had been no need to make any alteration at all in that Page. But becauſe, tho there was a connection between that Dialogue and the reſt of the Papers from which 'tis diſmembered, yet it's dependency upon the others, is not ſo very great, but that the Publiſher thought the divulging of it might be uſeful and ſeaſonable: and therefore finding that want of Leiſure,*

and much Diffidence, made the Author unwilling to reviſe, and part with the other Papers that accompanied this which now comes forth; he prevail'd with him to ſuffer that Dialogue to take its Fortune, which the Publiſher hopes may be ſuch, as may incourage the Author to communicate what he has further meditated upon ſuch Subjects.

ERRATA.

Pag. 3. lin. 3. read *Arnobius*. p. 9. l. 5. r. how. p. 25 l. 28. r. *continui*. p. ib. l. 21 r. *bucusque ſuperata*. p. 38. l 20. for near read above. p. 56. l. 18. r. deny. p. 60. l. 5. r. ſight. p 84. l. 7. r. men of. p. 86. l. ult. r. us; for. p. 92. l. 22. r. Time will. p 93. l. 12. r. do. P. 4 l. 12. r. bare repetition. p. 34. l. 6. r. Body. p. 42. l. 3. r. inſtance. p. 43. l. 16. r. -gy. p. 48. l. 26. r. -ſoners. p. 50. l. 3. r. thing. p. 62. l. 1. r. evidence of.

A DISCOURSE OF Things ABOVE REASON.

ENQUIRING,

Whether a Philoſopher ſhould admit there are any ſuch.

The Speakers are, *Sophronius*, *Eugenius*, *Pyrocles*, and *Timotheus*.

Euge. THE Serioufneſs you yet retain in your looks, and the poſture we found you in at our entrance, makes me fear theſe two Gentlemen and I are unſeaſonable

ſeaſonable intruders, that are ſo unhappy as to diſturb your Meditations.

Sophron. Inſtead of doing that, you will much promote them, if you pleaſe to accompany me in them: For the ſubject that buſied my thoughts is both ſo abſtruſe and ſo important, that it needs more than one to conſider it, and deſerves that He ſhould be a far better conſiderer than I, who therefore muſt think my ſelf far leſs fit for that task than you.

Eug. I will puniſh the flattery of theſe laſt words, by declining to make any Return to it.

Pyrocl. And I, Gentlemen, to prevent the loſs of time and words between you, ſhall without farther Ceremony ask *Sophronius*, what his thoughts were employed about when we came in.

Sophr. I was then muſing upon a Subject,

Subject, that was newly propoſed to me by our common Friend *Arnobiat*, who would needs have my opinion, *Whether*, and if at all, *how far*, we may employ our reaſonings about things that are above our Reaſon, as Chriſtians grant ſome myſteries of their Religion to be.

Euge. If, by *things above Reaſon*, be meant only thoſe, that are undiſcoverable by Reaſon without Revelation; I ſhould not heſitate to ſay, that there may be divers things of that kind: For the free Decrees of God, and his determinations concerning the Government of the World, and the future ſtate of mankind (to name now no others) are things which no humane Reaſon can pry into, but muſt owe the fundamental diſcovery it makes of them, to the Revelation of him, whoſe purpoſes they are.

But if, by *things above Reaſon*, be meant ſuch, as though delivered in words, free from darkneſs and Ambiguity, are not to be conceived,

and comprehended by our Rational Faculty, I ſhall freely confeſs, that I ſcarce know what to ſay upon ſo unuſual and ſublime a ſubject.

Pyrocl. For my part, Gentlemen, I think it were very requiſite to be ſure in the firſt place, that the ſubject of our Diſcourſes is not Chimerical, but that we can really know, that there are things we cannot comprehend, though they be propoſed to us in expreſſions no leſs clear than ſuch, as would ſuffice to make other things intelligible to us.

Sophr. Your cautiouſneſs, *Pyrocles*, muſt not be rejected by *me*, who when, before you came in, I was putting my thoughts into ſome order, judg'd it unfit to conſider, either how one might know what things were to be look'd on as above Reaſon, how far we may diſcourſe of them, or whether or no any ſupernaturally revealed Propoſitions, ſuch as Divines call Articles of Faith, ought

ought to be reckoned among them, till I ſhould have firſt ſeriouſly enquir'd, whether in general we ought to admit any ſuch Objects of our Contemplation, as theſe, and the like Queſtions ſuppoſe.

Euge. I hope then that this being the firſt thing you purpoſed to enquire into, we may, without too much boldneſs, deſire to know what came into your mind about it.

Sophr. If I had brought my conſiderations to an iſſue upon that ſubject, I ſhould with leſs reluctancy acquaint you with them; but I ſince I have yet made but an imperfect progreſs in my enquiry, inſtead of delivering any poſitive opinion upon ſo abſtruſe a ſubject, I ſhall only tell you, that as far as I could yet diſcern, it ſeemed to me that among the Objects, our reaſon may contemplate there are *ſome* whoſe Nature we cannot comprehend, others whoſe Attributes or Actions are ſuch, as that we cannot underſtand

how they ſhould belong to the Subject, or elſe that we cannot conceive how they ſhould conſiſt with ſome acknowledged Truth.

Euge. So that if I apprehend you right, you do not only admit ſome things to be above Reaſon, but make no leſs than three ſorts of them.

Sophr. If you will needs have two of them to be coincident, I ſhall not much contend, but I think the number you have named may, without any great inconvenience, be admitted: For by things above Reaſon, I here underſtand (not falſe or abſurd ones, but) ſuch, as though the Intellect ſees ſufficient cauſe (whether on the ſcore of Experience, Authentick Teſtimony, or Mathematical Demonſtration) to aſſent to; yet it finds it ſelf reduc'd when 'tis converſant about them, to be ſo with a notable and peculiar diſadvantage: And this diſadvantage does uſually proceed *either* from the nature of the thing propoſed, which is ſuch, that

that we cannot ſufficiently comprehend it, *or* from our not being able to conceive the manner of its exiſting and operating; *or* from this, that it involves ſome notion or propoſition, that we ſee not how to reconcile with ſome other thing, that we are perſwaded to be a truth. The firſt of theſe three ſorts of things, may, for brevity and diſtinction ſake be called *Incomprehenſible*, the ſecond *Inexplicable*, and the third *Unſociable*. But for fear leſt the ſhortneſs I have uſed in my expreſſions, may have kept them from being ſo clear, I ſhall ſomewhat more explicitly reckon up the three ſorts of things that ſeem to me above Reaſon.

The firſt conſiſts of thoſe whoſe Nature is not diſtinctly and adequately comprehenſible by us: To which ſort perhaps we may refer all thoſe intellectual Beings (if it be granted that there are ſuch) as are by nature of a higher order than humane Souls. To which ſort ſome as the Angels (at leaſt of the good

ones) may probably belong; but more than probably we may refer to this Head, the Divine Author of Nature, and of our Souls, *Almighty God*, whoſe perfections are ſo boundleſs, and his Nature ſo very ſingular, that 'tis no leſs weakneſs than preſumption to imagine, that ſuch finite Beings as our Souls, can frame full and adequate *Idea's* of them: We may indeed know by the conſideration of his works, and particularly thoſe parts of them that we our ſelves are, both *That he is*, and in a great meaſure *What he is not*; but to underſtand throughly *What he is*, is a task too great for any but his own infinite Intellect: And therefore I think we may truly call this immenſe Object, in the newly declared ſence, *ſupra-Intellectual.*

Euge. I ſuppoſe I may now ask what is the ſecond ſort of Things above Reaſon?

Sophr. It conſiſts of ſuch, as though

though we cannot deny *that they are*, yet we cannot clearly and ſatisfactorily conceive, *how they can be* ſuch as we acknowledge they are. As how *Matter* can be *infinitely*, (or which is all one, in our preſent diſcourſe, *indefinitely*) *diviſible*: And how there ſhould be ſuch an *incommenſurableneſs* betwixt the Side and Diagonal of a Square, that no meaſure, how ſmall ſoever, can adequatly meaſure both the one and the other.

That Matter is endleſly diviſible, is not only the aſſertion of *Ariſtotle* and the Schools, but generally embraced by thoſe rigid Reaſoners, Geometricians themſelves; and may be farther confirm'd by the other inſtance of the Side and *Diagonal* of a Square, whoſe incommenſurableneſs is believed upon no leſs firm a proof, than a demonſtration of *Euclid*, and was ſo known a truth among the Ancients, that *Plato* is ſaid to have pronounced him rather a Beaſt than a Man, that was a ſtranger to it. And yet if continued quantity

quantity be not diviſible without ſtop, how can we conceive but that there may be found ſome determinate part of the ſide of a Square, which being often enough repeated, would exactly meaſure the Diagonal too. But though Mathematical Demonſtrations aſſure us, that theſe things are ſo, yet thoſe that have ſtrained their Brains, have not been able clearly to conceive how it ſhould be poſſible, that a Line (for inſtance) of not a quarter of an inch long, ſhould be ſtill diviſible into leſſer and leſſer portions, without ever coming to an end of thoſe ſubdiviſions; or how among the innumerable differing partitions into aliquot parts, that may be made of the ſide of a Square, not one of thoſe parts can be found exactly to meaſure ſo ſhort a Line as the Diagonal may be.

Euge. There is yet behind, *Sophronius*, the *third* ſort of thoſe things, which, according to you, ſurpaſs our Reaſon.

Sophr.

Sophr. I ſhall name that too, *Eugenius*, as ſoon as I have premiſed that ſome of the Reaſons that moved me to refer ſome inſtances to this head, do not ſo peculiarly belong to thoſe inſtances, but that they may be applicable to others, which 'twas thought convenient to refer to the ſecond or firſt of the foregoing Heads: And this being once intimated, I ſhall proceed to tell you, that the *third ſort* of things that ſeem to ſurpaſs our Reaſon, conſiſts of thoſe, to which the Rules and Axioms and Notions, whereby we judge of the truth and falſhood of ordinary, or other things, ſeem not to agree.

This third ſort being ſuch as are incumbred with Difficulties or Objections, that cannot directly and ſatisfactorily be removed by them that acquieſce in the received Rules of ſubordinate Sciences, and do reaſon but at the common rate, ſuch Objects of Contemplation as this third ſort conſiſts of, having ſomething belonging to them, that ſeems not

not reconcilable with ſome very manifeſt, or at leaſt acknowledged Truths.

This it may here ſuffice to make out by a couple of Inſtances, the one of a Moral, the other of a Mathematical Nature: And firſt, that Man has a free will, in reference at leaſt to civil matters, is the general confeſſion of Mankind: All the Laws that forbid and puniſh Murder, Adultery, Theft, and other Crimes, being founded on a Suppoſition, that men have a power to forbear committing them, and the ſenſe men have of their being poſſeſt of this power over their own actions, is great enough to make Malefactors acknowledg their puniſhments to be juſt, being no leſs condemned by their own Conſciences, than by their Judges.

And yet (ſome *Socinians*, and ſome few others excepted) the generality of Mankind, whether Chriſtians, Jews, Mahometans, or Heathens, aſcribe to God an infallible Preſcience of humane Actions, which

which is ſuppoſed by the belief of Prophecies, and the recourſe to Oracles, by one or other of which two ways the Embracers of the ſeveral Religions newly mentioned, have endeavoured and expected to receive the informations of future things, and ſuch as depend upon the Actings of men. But how a certain fore-knowledg can be had of contingent things, and ſuch as depend upon the free will of man, is that which many great wits that have ſolicitouſly tryed, have found themſelves unable clearly to comprehend, nor is it much to be admired that they ſhould be puzled to conceive how an infinitely perfect Being ſhould want Preſcience, or that their will ſhould want that liberty, whereof they feel in themſelves the almoſt perpetual exerciſe.

The other inſtance I promiſed you, *Euge.* is afforded me by Geometricians: For theſe (you know) teach the diviſibility of Quantity *in infinitum* or without ſtop, to be Mathe-

Mathematically demonſtrable. Give me leave then to propoſe to you a ſtrait line of three foot long divided into two parts, the one double to the other. I ſuppoſe then, that according to their doctrine a line of two foot is diviſible into infinite parts, or it is not: If you ſay it is not, you contradict the demonſtrations of the Geometricians; if you ſay that it is, then you muſt confeſs either that the line of one foot is diviſible into as many parts as the line of two foot, though the one be but half the other, or elſe that the infinite parts, into which the line of one foot is granted to be diviſible, is exceeded in number by the parts, into which the line of two foot is diviſible, and conſequently that the line of two foot has a multitude of parts greater than infinite. Which Reaſonings may let us ſee that we may be reduced *either* to reject Inferences legitimately drawn from manifeſt or granted Truths, *or* to admit concluſions that appear abſurd; if we *will* have *all* the common

mon Rules whereby we judge of other things to be applicable to Infinites.

And now, Gentlemen, having acquainted you with what ſorts of things ſeem to be above Reaſon, I muſt, to prevent miſtakes, deſire you to take along with you this Advertiſement: That though the nobleneſs and difficulty of ſo uncultivated a Subject, inclined me to offer ſomething towards the elucidating of it, by ſorting thoſe things into three kinds; yet I ſhall not, and need not in this Conference, inſiſt on them ſeverally, or lay any ſtreſs on this partition. For though I have above intimated, that a Propoſition may ſpeak of ſomewhat that is *ſupra-intellectual*, or elſe contain ſomewhat which we cannot conceive how it may be true, or laſtly teach us ſomewhat for a truth, that we cannot reconcile with ſome other thing, that we are convinced is true; yet if but any one of theſe have true Inſtances belonging to it, *That* may ſuffice for my main purpoſe

poſe in this place, where I need only ſhew in general, *that there may be things that ſurpaſs our Reaſon*, at leaſt ſo far, that they are not to be judged of by the ſame meaſures and rules, by which men are wont to judge of ordinary things, for which reaſon I ſhall often give them one common name, calling them *Priviledg'd Things*.

Euge. Methinks that to manifeſt the Imperfections of our Reaſon, in reference to what you call Priviledg'd Things, you need not have recourſe to the unfathomable Abyſſes of the Divine Nature, ſince for ought I know, *Pyrocles*, as well as I, may be non-plus'd by an inſtance that came into my mind *de Compoſitione continui*.

Timoth. Since *Sophronius* has not thought fit to give us any of the Arguments of the contending party's, I ſhall be glad to know what difficulty occurr'd to you.

Euge. Suppoſe a great Circle divided

vided into its three hundred and ſixty degrees, and ſuppoſe that as great a number as you pleaſe or can conceive, of ſtrait lines, be drawn from the ſeveral deſignable parts of ſome one of theſe degrees, to the Centre, 'tis manifeſt that the degrees being equal, as many lines may be drawn from any, and ſo from every one of the others, as from that degree which was pitched upon.

Then ſuppoſe a Circular Arch, equal to the aſſumed degree, to be further bent into the circumference of a little circle, having the ſame Centre with a great one, it follows from the nature of a Circle, and has been geometrically demonſtrated, that the ſemi-diameters of a Circle how many ſoever they be, can no where touch one another but in the Centre. Whence 'tis evident, that all the lines that are drawn from the circumference to the Centre of the greater Circle, muſt paſs by differing points of the circumference of the ſmaller, (for

 elſe

elſe they would touch one another before they arrive at the Centre) and conſequently that as many lines ſoever as can even mentally be drawn from the ſeveral points of the circumference of the great Circle to the common Centre of both Circles, muſt all paſs through different points of the little Circle, and thereby divide it into as many parts (proportionably ſmaller) as the greater Circle is divided into: So that here the circumference of the leſſer Circle preſents us with a curve line, which was not poſſibly diviſible into more parts than an Arch of one degree, or the three hundred and ſixtieth part of the Circumference of the greater Circle, and yet without being lengthned, becomes diviſible into as many parts as the whole circumference of the ſame greater Circle. And though we ſhould ſuppoſe the circumference of the internal Circle not to exceed one inch, and that of the exterior Circle to exceed the circumference of the Terreſtrial Globe,

Globe, or even of the Firmament it ſelf, yet ſtill the demonſtration would hold, and all the lines drawn from this vaſt Circle, would find diſtinct points in the leſſer, to paſs through to their common Centre.

Timoth. Though I will not pretend to confirm what *Sophronius* has been proving, by adding Arguments *a priori*; yet I ſhall venture to ſay, that I think it very agreeable both to the nature of God and to that of man, that what he has endeavoured to prove true ſhould be ſo; for we men miſtake and flatter Humane Nature too much, when we think our faculties of Underſtanding ſo unlimited, both in point of capacity and of extent, and ſo free and unprepoſſeſt, as many Philoſophers ſeem to ſuppoſe: For, whatever our ſelf-love may incline us to imagine, we are really but created and finite Beings (and that probably of none of the higheſt orders of intellectual Creatures) and we come into the world, but ſuch, as it pleaſed the Almighty and moſt

free Author of our Nature to make us. And from this dependency and limitedneſs of our Natures, it follows not only that we may be (for I now diſpute not whether we are) born with certain congenit Notions and Impreſſions and Appetites or Tendencies of Mind; but alſo that the means or meaſures which are furniſhed us to employ in the ſearching or judging of Truth, are but ſuch as are proportionable to Gods deſigns in creating us, and therefore may probably be ſuppoſed not to be capable of reaching to all kinds, or if you pleaſe of Truths, *many* of which may be unneceſſary for us to know here, and ſome may be reſerved, partly to make us ſenſible of the imperfections of our Natures, and partly to make us aſpire to that condition, wherein our faculties ſhall be much enlarged and heightned. It ſeems not therefore unreaſonable to think, both that God has made our faculties ſo limited, that in our preſent mortal condition there ſhould be ſome Objects beyond

beyond the comprehenſion of our Intellects (that is) that ſome of his creatures ſhould not be able perfectly to underſtand ſome others, & yet that he has given us light enough to perceive that we cannot attain to a clear and full knowledge of them.

Pyrocl. I think, *Sophronius*, that I now underſtand what you mean by *Things above reaſon*, or as you (not unfitly) ſtiled them, *priviledged things:* But I preſume you need not be told, that to explain the ſence of a Propoſition, and to make out the truth of it, (unleſs in common Notions, or things evident by their own light) are always two things, and oftentimes two very diſtant ones.

Sophr. I need not ſcruple, *Pyrocles*, to grant the truth of what you ſay, but I muſt not ſo eaſily admit your application of it; for among the examples, I have been propoſing, there are ſome at leaſt, that do not only *declare* what I mean by things above reaſon, but are inſtan-

ces, and consequently may be *proofs* that such things there are. And to those I could have added others, if I had thought it unlikely, that in the progress of our Conference, there may be occasions offered of mentioning them more opportunely.

Pyrol. I have long thought that the wit of man, was able to lay a fine varnish upon any thing that it would recommend; but I have not till now found Reason set a work to degrade it self, as if it were a noble exercise of its power to establish its own impotency: And indeed 'tis strange to me, how you would have our Reason comprehend and reach things, that you your self confess to be above Reason, which is methinks, as if we were told that we may see things with our eye that are invisible.

Sophr. I do not think, that 'ti to degrade the understanding, t refuse to idolize it, and 'tis not a injury to Reason, to think it a li mited faculty, but an injury to th Autho

Author of it, to think man's understanding infinite, like his. And if what I proposed be well grounded, I assign Reason its most noble and genuine Exercise, which is to close with discovered Truths, in whose embraces the perfection of the Intellect too much consists, to suffer that perfective action to be justly disparaging to it: And a sincere understanding is to give, or refuse its assent to propositions according as they are or are not true, not according as we could or could not wish they were so; and methinks it were somewhat strange, that Impartiality should be made a disparagement in a Judge. But, *Pyrocles*, leaving the reflection with which you usher'd in your Objection, I shall now consider the Argument it self, which being the weightiest that can be framed against the opinion you oppose, I shall beg leave to offer some considerations, wherein I shall endeavour to answer it both by proving my Opinion by experience, and by

ſhewing that experience not to be diſagreeable to Reaſon.

Pyrocl. I ſhall very willingly liſten to what you have to ſay on ſuch a ſubject.

Sophr. I ſhall then in the firſt place alledge the experience of many perſons, and divers of them great Wits, who have perplexed themſelves to reconcile, I ſay, not the Grace of God, but even his Preſcience to the liberty of mans will, even in bare moral actions: And I have found partly by their Writings, and by diſcourſe with ſome of them, that the moſt towring and ſubtle ſort of Speculators, Metaphyſicians, and Mathematicians, perchance after much racking of their brains, confeſs themſelves quite baffled by the unconquerable difficulties they met with, not only in ſuch abſtruſe ſubjects, as the nature of God, or of the humane Soul, but in the nature of what belongs in common to the moſt obvious Bodies in the world, and even to the leaſt portions of them: You will eaſily

ſily gueſs that I have my eye on that famous controverſie, Whether or no a continued quantity (which every body, as having length, bredth, depth, muſt be allowed to have) be made up of Indiviſibles. Of the perplexing difficulties of this Controverſie, I might give you divers confeſſions, or complaints made by a ſort of men too much accuſtomed to bold aſſertions and ſubtle Arguments, to be much diſpoſed to make acknowledgments of that kind: But I ſhall content my ſelf with the teſtimony which one of the more famous modern Schoolmen gives both of himſelf and other learned men, and which if I well remember, he thus expreſſes. *Aggredimur comtinus compoſitionem, cujus hujuſque non ſeparata difficultas omnium Doctorum male ingenia vexavit, neque ullus fuit qui illam non pene inſuperabilem agnoſcat. Hanc plerique terminorum obſcuritate, illorumque replicatis & implicatis diſtinctionibus, & ſubdiſtinctionibus obtenebrant, ne aperté capiantur deſperantes rem* Ovied contr. 17. Phyſ.

poſſ-

posse alio modo tractari neque rationis lucem sustinere, sed necessario confusionis tenebris obtegendum, ne argumentorum evidentiâ detegatur.

And though he had not been thus candid in his confession, yet what he says might be easily concluded by him, that shall duly weigh with how great, though not equal force of Arguments, each of the contending parties imputes to the opinion it opposes, great and intolerable absurdities as contained in it, or legitimately deducible from it.

Eug. I have not the vanity to think that the weakness of my Reason ought to make another diffident of the strength of his: But as to my self, what *Sophronius* has been saying cannot but be confirm'd by several tryals, wherein having exerted the small abilities I had to clear up to my self some of the difficulties about Infinites: I perceived to my trouble, that my speculations satisfied me of nothing so much, as the disproportionateness of those abstruse subjects to my reason. But,

Sophro-

Sophronius, may it not be well objected, that though the Inſtances you have given, have not been hitherto cleared by the light of Reaſon; yet 'tis probable they may be ſo hereafter, conſidering how great progreſs is, from time to time, made in the diſcoveries of Nature, in this learned Age of ours.

Sophr. In anſwer to this queſtion, *Eugenius*, give me leave to tell you firſt, that you allow my paſt diſcourſe to hold good *for ought yet appears to the contrary*: Whence it will follow, that your Objection is grounded upon a hope, or at moſt a Conjecture about which I need not therefore trouble my ſelf, till ſome new diſcoveries about the things in queſtion, engage me to a new conſideration of them. But in the mean while, give me leave to repreſent to you in the ſecond place, that though I am very willing to believe, as well as I both deſire and hope it, that this inquiſitive Age we live in, will produce diſcoveries that will explicate divers of the more

more hidden myſteries of Nature, yet I expect that theſe diſcoveries will chiefly concern thoſe things, which either we are ignorant of for want of a competent Hiſtory of Nature, or we miſtake by reaſon of erroneous Prepoſſeſſions, or for want of freedom and attention in our ſpeculations. But I have not the like expectations as to all Metaphyſical difficulties, (if I may ſo call them) wherein neither matters of Fact, nor the *Hypotheſes* of ſubordinate parts of Learning, are wont much to avail. But however it be, as to other abſtruſe Objects, I am very apt to think, that there are ſome things relating to that infinite and moſt Monadical Being (if I may ſo ſpeak) that we call *God*, which will ſtill remain incomprehenſible even to Philoſophical underſtandings. And I can ſcarce allow my ſelf to hope to ſee thoſe Obſtacles ſurmounted, that proceed not from any Perſonal infirmity, or evitable faults, but from the limited nature of the Intellect:

And

And to theſe two conſiderations, *Eugenius*, I ſhall in anſwer to your queſtion, add this alſo: That as mens inquiſitiveneſs may hereafter extricate ſome of thoſe grand difficulties, that have hitherto perplexed Philoſophers; ſo it may poſſibly lead them to diſcover new difficulties more capable than the firſt, of baffling humane underſtandings. For even among the things wherewith we are already converſant, there are divers which we think we know, only becauſe we never with due attention, tryed whether we can frame ſuch *Ideas* of them, as are clear and worthy for a rational ſeeker and lover of truth to acquieſce in. This the great intricacy that conſidering men find, in the notions commonly receiv'd of ſpace, time, motion, *&c.* and the difficulties of framing perſpicuous and ſatisfactory apprehenſions even of ſuch obvious things, may render highly probable. We ſee alſo that the Angle of Contact, the Doctrine of *Aſymptotes*, and that of ſurd numbers

bers and incommenſurable Lines, all which trouble not common Accomptants and Surveyors, (who though they deal ſo much in numbers and lines, ſeldom take notice of any of them) perplex the greateſt Mathematicians, and ſome of them ſo much, that they can rather demonſtrate, that ſuch affections belong to them, than they can conceive how they can do ſo: All which may render it probable, that mens growing curioſity is not more likely to find the ſolutions of ſome difficulties, than to take notice of other things, that may prove more inſuperable than they.

Tim. This conjecture of yours, *Sophronius*, is not a little favoured by the *Rota Ariſtotelica*; for though the motion of a Cart-wheel is ſo obvious and ſeems ſo plain a thing, that the Carman himſelf never looks upon it with wonder; yet after *Ariſtotle* had taken notice of the difficulty that occurr'd about it, this trivial *Phænomenon* has perplex'd divers great Wits, not only

School-

Schoolmen, but Mathematicians, and continues yet to do ſo, there being ſome circumſtances in the progreſſive motion and rotation of the circumference of a Wheel, and its Nave, or of two points aſſigned, the one in the former, and the other in the latter, that have appeared too ſubtle (and even to modern) Writers, ſo hard to be conceived and reconciled to ſome plain and granted Truths, that ſome of them have given over the ſolution of the attending difficulties as deſperate, which perchance, *Pyrocles*, would not think ſtrange, if I had time to inſiſt on the intricacies that are to be met with in a ſpeculation, that ſeems ſo eaſie as to be deſpicable.

Sophr. Your Inſtance, *Timotheus*, muſt be acknowledged a very pregnant one, if you are certain that a better account cannot be given of the *Rota Ariſtotelica*, than is wont to be in the Schools, by thoſe Peripateticks that either frankly confeſs the difficulties to be inſoluble, or leſs ingenuouſly pretend to give

ſolutions

ſolutions of them, that ſuppoſe things not to be proved, or perhaps ſo much as underſtood (as Rarefaction and Condenſation ſtrictly ſo called) or loſe the queſtion and perhaps themſelves, by running up the diſpute into that moſt obſcure and perplexing Controverſie *de compoſitione continui.*

Eugen. I am content to forbear preſſing any further at preſent an Objection; much of whoſe force depends on future contingents, and I ſhall the rather diſmiſs the proof drawn from experience, that I may the ſooner put you in mind of your having promiſed us another Argument to the ſame purpoſe, by manifeſting the opinion to be agreeable to Reaſon.

Sophr. I underſtand your pleaſure, *Eugenius*, and ſhall endeavour to comply with it, but the difficulty and intricateneſs of the Subject of our diſcourſe, obliges me to do it by ſteps; and for fear we ſhould want time for more neceſſary things, I will not now ſtay to examine

mine whether all the things that hitherto have appeared above Reason, be impenetrable to us, because of an essential disability of our understandings, proceeding from the imperfection and limitedness of their nature, or only because of some other impediment, such as may be especially the condition of the soul in this life, or the infirmities resulting from its state of union with a gross and mortal body.

Forbearing then to discourse how this came into my mind, and what thoughts I had upon it, I shall proceed in my considerations; and to clear the way for those that are to follow, I shall in the first place observe to you, that whatever be thought of the faculty *in abstracto*, yet Reason operates according to certain Notions or Ideas, and certain Axiomes and Propositions, by which as by Prototypes or Models, and Rules and Measures, it conceives things, and makes estimates and judgments of them. And indeed when we say that such a thing

is consonant to Reason, or repugnant to it, we usually mean that it is either immediately or mediately deducible from, or at least consistent with, or contradictory to one or other of those standard Notions or Rules.

And this being premis'd, I consider in the next place, that if these Rules and Notions be such, as are abstracted only from finite things, or are congruous but to them; they may prove useless or deceitful to us, when we go about to stretch them beyond their measure, and apply them to the infinite God, or to things that involve an Infiniteness either in multitude, magnitude, or littleness.

To illustrate and confirm this notion, give me leave to represent in the third place, that in my opinion all the things that we naturally do know or can know, may be divided into these two sorts: The one such as we may know without a *Medium*, and the other such as we cannot attain to, but by the intervention of a *Me-*

a *Medium*, or by a diſcurſive act. To the firſt belong ſuch Notions as are ſuppoſed to be *connate*, or if you pleaſe *innate*, ſuch as that *Two contradictories cannot be both together true*. The whole is greater than any part of it; *Every (entire) number is either even or odd, &c.* And alſo thoſe other Truths, that are aſſented to upon their own account without needing any *medium* to prove them; becauſe that as ſoon as, by perſpicuous terms, or fit examples, they are clearly propoſed to the underſtanding, they diſcover themſelves to be true ſo manifeſtly by their own light, that they need not be aſſiſted by any intervening Propoſition, to make the Intellect acquieſce in them; of which kind are ſome of *Euclids Axioms*, as that, *If to equal things equal things be added, the totals will be equal*; and that *two right lines cannot include a ſpace*. To the ſecond ſort of things knowable by us, belong all that we acquire the knowledge of by Ratiocinations, wherein by the help of

intervening Propoſitions or *Mediums*, we deduce one thing from another, or conclude affirmatively or negatively one thing of another. This being ſuppoſed, and we being conſcious to our ſelves, if it were but upon the ſcore of our own infirmities and imperfections, that we are not Authors of our own nature; for ought we know it may be true, and all the experience we have hitherto had, leads us to think it is true, that the meaſures ſuggeſted to us either by ſenſations, the reſults of ſenſible obſervation, or the other inſtruments of knowledge, are ſuch as fully reach but to finite things or Beings, and therefore are not ſafely applicable to others. And divers of thoſe very Principles that we think very general, may be (if I may ſo ſpeak) but gradual notions of truth, and but limited and reſpective, not abſolute and univerſal.

And here give me leave, as a farther conſideration, to take notice to you, that though perfect Syllogiſms

be counted the beſt and moſt regular forms that our Ratiocinations can aſſume, yet even the laws of theſe are grounded on the doctrine of Proportions: For even between things equal there may be a proportion (namely that of equality) upon which ground I ſuppoſe it is, that Mathematical Demonſtrations have been publickly propoſed of the grand Syllogiſtical Rules. And in conſequence of this, I ſhall add that Geometricians will tell you, that there is no proportion betwixt a finite line and an infinite, becauſe the former can never be ſo often taken, as to exceed the latter, which according to *Euclid*'s definition of Proportion, it ſhould be capable to do. Of which Premiſes the uſe I would make is to perſwade you, that ſince the underſtanding operates but by the Notions and Truths 'tis furniſhed with, and theſe are its inſtruments by proportion to which it takes meaſures, and makes judgments of other things; theſe Inſtruments may be too diſpropor-

Rationem habere inter ſe quantitates dicuntur quæ poſſunt multiplicatæ, ſeſe mutuo ſuperare. Definit. 5. Elem. V. Euclidis.

tionate to ſome Objects to be ſecurely employed to determine divers particulars about them: So the eye being an inſtrument which the underſtanding employs to eſtimate diſtances, we cannot by that ſafely take the bredth of the Ocean, becauſe our ſight cannot reach far enough to diſcover how far ſo vaſt an object extends it ſelf. And *not only* the common inſtruments of Surveyors that would ſerve to meaſure the height of an houſe or a ſteeple, or even a Mountain, cannot enable them to take the diſtance of the Moon; *but*, when Aſtronomers do, by ſuppoſition, take a chain that reaches to the Centre of the Earth (and therefore is by the Moderns judged to be near four thouſand miles long) even then I ſay, *though* by the help of this and the Parallaxes, they may tolerably well meaſure the diſtance of ſome of the neerer Planets, eſpecially the Moon; yet with all their great induſtry they cannot by the ſame way (or perhaps any other yet known) with

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any thing tolerable acurateneſs, meaſure the diſtance of the fixed Stars; the Semidiameter of the Earth, bearing no ſenſible proportion to that of ſo vaſt a Sphere as the Firmament, whoſe diſtance makes the Parallaxes vaniſh, it being as to ſence all one, whether at ſo great a remove, a Star be obſerv'd from the Centre, or from the ſurface of the Earth.

Eug. In a matter ſo abſtruſe, a little Illuſtration by examples, may be very proper and welcome.

Sophr. 'Tis ſcarce poſſible to find very appoſite examples, to illuſtrate things of a kind ſo abſtruſe and heteroclite as thoſe may well be ſuppos'd, that do ſurpaſs our Reaſon.

But yet ſome aſſiſtance may be borrowed from what we may obſerve in that other faculty of the mind, which is moſt of kin to the Intellect, I mean the *Imagination*: For when, for inſtance, I think of a Triangle or a Square, I find in my fancy an intuitive *Idea* (if I may ſo

call it) of those figures that is a Picture clear and distinct, as if a figure of three sides or four equal sides, and Angles were placed before my eyes.

But if I would fancy a *myriagon*, or a figure consisting of ten thousand equal sides, my Imagination is overpowered with so great a multitude of them, and frames but a confused *Idea* of a *Polygon* with a very great many sides: For if (to speak suitably to what the excellent *Des Cartes* has well observed in the like case) a man should endeavour to frame *Ideas* of a *Myriagon* or a *Chiliagon*, they would be both so confused, that his Imagination would not be able clearly to discriminate them, though the one has ten times as many sides as the other. So if you would imagine an Atome, of which perhaps ten thousand would scarce make up the bulk of one of the light particles of dust, that seem to play in the Sunbeams when they are shot into a darkned place, so extraordinary a littleness

not

not having fallen under any of our Senſes, cannot truly be repreſented in our imagination. So when we ſpeak of Gods Primity (if I may ſo call it) Omnipotence, and ſome other of his infinite Attributes and Perfections, we have ſome conceptions of the things we ſpeak of, but may very well diſcern them to be but inadequate ones: And though divers Propoſitions relating to things above Reaſon, ſeem clear enough to ordinary Wits, yet he that ſhall with a competent meaſure of attention, curioſity, and skill, conſider and examine them; ſhall find that either their parts are inconſiſtent with one another, or they involve contradictions to ſome acknowledged or manifeſt Truths, or they are veil'd over with darkneſs and incumbered with difficulties, from whence we are not able to reſcue them. Thus when the ſide and Diagonal of a Square are propoſed, we have clear and diſtinct *Ideas* of each of them apart, and when they are compared, we

may

may have a conception of their incommenſurableneſs. But yet this negative notion, if it be throughly conſidered, and far enough purſued, clearly contains that of a ſtrait lines being diviſible *in infinitum*; and that diviſibility is incumbred with ſo many difficulties, and is ſo hard to be reconciled to ſome confeſſed dictates of Reaſon, that (as we have ſeen already) Philoſophers and Geometricians that are convinc'd of the truth, are to this day labouring to extricate themſelves out of thoſe perplexing intricacies.

I will not trouble you with the puzling, if not inſuperable difficulties, that incumber the doctrine of *Eternity*, as 'tis wont to be propoſed in the Schools of Divines and Philoſophers, leſt you ſhould alledge that theſe difficulties ſpring rather from the bold aſſumptions and groundleſs ſubtleties of the Schoolmen, than from the nature of the thing it ſelf: But I will propoſe ſomewhat that cannot be denyed,

denyed, which is, that ſome ſubſtance or other, whether, as I believe, *God*, or as the Peripateticks ſay, the *World*, or as the Epicureans contend, *Matter*, never had a beginning, that is, has been for ever. But when we ſpeak of an eternity *à parte ante* (as they call it) we do not ſpeak of a thing whereof we have no conception at all, as will appear to a conſidering perſon, and yet this general notion we have is ſuch, that when we come attentively to examine it, by the ſame ways by which we judge of almoſt all other things, the Intellect is non-plus'd: For we muſt conceive, that the time efflux'd ſince *Adam* (or any other man as remote from us as he is ſaid to have been) began to live, bears no more proportion to the duration of God, or of Matter, than to thoſe few minutes I have imployed about mentioning this inſtance. Nay if we would be Ariſtotelians, the ſame thing may be ſaid as to thoſe men, that lived many thouſand millions of years before

before the time we reckon that *Adam* began to live in: For each of these times being finite and measurable by a determinate number of years, can bear no proportion to that infinite number of years (or somewhat that is equivalent) which must be allowed to a duration that never had a beginning. And as there are some things whose nature and consequences pose our Faculties, so there are others, whereof though we have a notion, yet the *modus operandi* is beyond our comprehension; I do not mean only the *true* and certain *modus operandi*, but even an *intelligible* one. As, though divers learned men, especially Cartesians, and that upon a Philosophical account, assert, that God created the world; yet how a substance could be made out of nothing (as they, and the generality of Christians confessedly hold) I fear we cannot conceive. And though all Philosophers, very few excepted, believe God to be the *Maker* of the World (out of pre-existent

existent matter) yet how he could make it but by locally moving the parts of the Matter it was to consist of, and how an incorporeal substance can move a body, which it may pass through without resistance, is that which I fear will be found hardly explicable: For if it be said, that the Soul, being an immaterial substance, can never the less move the Limbs of the humane Body rightly dispos'd, I shall answer that it does not appear that the rational Soul doth give any motion to the parts of the Body, but only *guide* or *regulate* that which she finds in them already.

Timoth. May it not then be rationally said, that by making observations of such things that are the proper Objects of our faculties, and by making legitimate deductions from such observations, and from our other knowledges whether innate or acquired, we may come to be certain, that some things *are*, and so have general and dark *Ideas* of them, when at the same time

time we are at a loſs to conceive *how they can be* ſuch, or how they can operate and perform what they do, ſuppoſing the Truth and ſufficiency of ſome other things we are convinced of. To be ſhort, negative apprehenſions we may have of ſome priviledged things, and poſitive, but indiſtinct apprehenſions we may have of others, and that is enough to make us in ſome ſort underſtand our ſelves, and one another, when we ſpeak of them, though yet when we ſufficiently conſider what we ſay, we may find that our words are not accompanied with clear, diſtinct, and ſymmetrical conceptions, of thoſe abſtruſe and perplexing things we ſpeak of. And ſince, as hath been already ſhewn, we find by experience, that we are unable ſufficiently to comprehend things, that by clear and legitimate conſequences may be evinc'd to *be*, why ſhould not this cogently argue, that ſome of our conceptions may be of things, to which ſomewhat belongs

that

that tranſcends our Reaſon, and ſurpaſſes our comprehenſion? And if I would play the Logician with *Pyrocles*, I would tell him that his Objection deſtroys his Opinion: For ſince he talks to us of what is incomprehenſible, that term muſt or muſt not be attended with ſome ſuitable *Idea*: If it be not, let him conſider, whether in his own Phraſe he ſpeaks ſence and not like a Parrot; but if it be, let him then confeſs, that one may have ſome kind of *Idea* of a thing incomprehenſible. But, *Pyrocles*, whether or no you think I prevaricate in this, you will not, I hope, ſuſpect me of doing it, in adding that when natural Theology had taught men, (as well Philoſophers as others) to believe God to be an infinitely perfect Being, we ought not to ſay that they had no *Idea* of ſuch a Being, becauſe they had not a *clear and adequate* one. And ſince *Ariſtotle* diſcourſes *ex profeſſo* and prolixly enough, *de infinito*, and cites the ancienter Philoſophers for having done

done ſo before him, and ſince (beſides his Commentators and Followers) *Democritus*, *Epicurus*, followed by *Gaſſendus* and other late Philoſophers, maintain either that the world is boundleſs, or that ſpace (real or imaginary) is not *finite* in *extent*, or that the world conſiſts of Atoms *infinite* in *number*; I hope you will not put ſuch an affront upon all theſe great perſons, as to think they ſaid they knew not what, when they diſcourſed *de infinito*, as they muſt have done, if they ſpake without *Ideas* of the things they ſpake of, though it may be juſtly ſuppoſed, that the Subject being *infinite*, the *Ideas* they framed of it, could not be *comprehenſive* and accurate.

Eug. So that according to you, *Sophronius*, it may be ſaid, that by reaſon we do not properly *perceive Things above Reaſon*, but only *perceive that they are above Reaſon*, there being a dark and peculiar kind of Impreſſion made upon the underſtanding, while it ſets it ſelf

to

to contemplate ſuch confounding Objects, by which peculiarity of impreſſion, as by a diſtinct and unwonted kind of internal ſenſation, the underſtanding is brought to diſtinguiſh this ſort of things (namely) tranſcendent or *priviledg'd* ones from others, and diſcern them to be diſproportionate to the powers with which it uſes throughly to penetrate Subjects, that are not impervious to it. As when the Eye looks into a deep Sea, though it may pierce a little way into it, yet when it would look deeper, it diſcovers nothing but ſomewhat which is dark and indiſtinct, which affects the ſenſory ſo differingly from what other more genuine objects are wont to do, that by it we eaſily diſcern, that our ſight fails us in the way before it arrives at the bottom, and conſequently that there may be many things conceal'd there, that our ſight is unable to reach.

Timoth. I gueſs, Gentlemen, by the ſilence you ſeem to conſpire in,

after ſo long a debate, that you have now ſaid as much as at preſent you think fit to ſay for and againſt this Propoſition, that there are Things above our Reaſon.

Sophr. I ſhall not, for my part, croſs your Obſervation, *Timotheus*, but inſtead of adding any new proofs, ſhall only deſire you to look back upon thoſe I have preſented you already, and to let me remind you, that of the two Arguments by which I attempted to ſhew that there are ſome things above Reaſon, the firſt and chiefeſt was ſuggeſted by Experience, and the other which was drawn from the nature of things and of man, was brought as 'twere, *ex abundanti*, to illuſtrate and confirm the former, and give occaſion to ſome hints about priviledg'd Subjects. And therefore though I hope what has been diſcours'd by theſe Gentlemen and me, may be able to perſwade *Pyrocles*, that the acknowledgment that ſome things are above Reaſon may fairly comply with the di-

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ſtates of it, yet whatever he thinks of the cogency of our diſcourſe, the truth of the main concluſion may be ſufficiently evinc'd by our firſt Argument drawn from experience: For if we really find, that there are things which our Reaſon cannot comprehend, then whether the account theſe Gentlemen and I have given, why our faculties are inſufficient, for theſe things be good or not; yet ſtill ſome true account or other there muſt be of that inſufficiency. And as we ſhould very thankfully receive from *Pyrocles*, any better account than what we have propounded, ſo if he cannot aſſign any better, I hope he will joyn with us in looking upon this, as very agreeable to our Hypotheſis; ſince hereby ſome things muſt appear to us ſo ſublime and abſtruſe, that not only we find we are not able to comprehend them, but that we are unable to diſcern ſo much as upon what account it is that they cannot be comprehended by us.

Eug. I am not averſe, *Sophroni-us*, from your Paradox about *gra-dual* notions, and I am the more in-clin'd to think, that ſome of the Axioms and Rules that are reputed to be very general, are not to be in-differently extended to all Subjects and caſes whatſoever; when I con-ſider the differing apprehenſions that the mind may frame of the ſame object, as well according to the vigour or (if I may ſo call it) rank of the underſtanding, as ac-cording to the differing informati-on 'tis furniſhed with: For if one ſhould propoſe to a child, for in-ſtance, of four or five years old the demonſtration of the one hun-dred and ſeventeenth Propoſition of *Euclid*'s tenth Book, wherein he proves the ſide and Diagonal of a Square to be incommenſura-ble, thongh poſſibly he may be a-ble to read the words that expreſs the *Theorem*, and though he has eyes to ſee the Scheme imployed for the demonſtration, yet if he ſhould ſpend a whole year about

you would never be able to make him underſtand it, becauſe 'tis quite above the reach of a Childs capacity: And if one ſhould ſtay till he be grown a man, yet ſuppoſing him to have never learned Geometry, though he may eaſily know what you mean by two incommenſurable lines, yet all the reaſon he has attained to in his virile age, would but indiſpoſe him to attain to that demonſtration; for all the experience he may have had of lines, will but have ſuggeſted to him as a manifeſt and general truth, that of any two ſtrait lines we may by meaſuring find how many Feet, Inches, or other determinate meaſure, the one exceeds the other. And though one that has been orderly inſtructed in all that long train of Propoſitions, that in *Euclid*'s Elements precede the one hundred and ſeventeenth of the tenth Book, will be alſo able to arrive at an evidence of this truth, *that thoſe two Lines are incommenſurable*; yet (as *Sophronius* formerly

noted) how it ſhould be poſſible that two ſhort Lines being propoſed, whereof each by it ſelf is eaſily meaſurable among thoſe innumerable multitudes of parts into which each of them may be mentally divided, there ſhould not be any one capable of exactly meaſuring both, is that which even a Geometrician that knows it is true, is not well able to conceive. But Gentlemen, that you may not accuſe my digreſſion, I ſhall urge theſe compariſons no further, my ſcope in mentioning them being to obſerve to you, that for ought we know to the contrary, ſuch a difference of intellectual Abilities as is but gradual in Children and Men may be eſſential in differing ranks of Intellectual Beings. And ſo it may be, that ſome of thoſe Axioms that we think general, may, when we apply them to things whereto they are not the true and proper meaſures, lead us into error, though perhaps Intellects of an higher order may unriddle thoſe difficulties

that confound us men, which conjecture I ſhould confirm by ſome things that would be readily granted me by Chriſtians, if I thought it proper to play the Divine in a diſcourſe purely Philoſophical.

Pyrocl. You, Gentlemen, have taken the liberty to make long diſcourſes, and I ſhall not much blame you for it, becauſe 'tis a thing as more eaſily, ſo more ſpeedily done, to propoſe difficulties than to ſolve them; yet methinks amongſt you all, you have left one part of my Objection unanſwer'd, not to ſay untouch'd.

Sophr. I ſuppoſe, *Pyrocles*, you mean what you ſaid about diſcerning inviſible things with the Eye, but I purpoſely forbore to take notice of *that*, becauſe I foreſaw it might be more ſeaſonably done, after ſome other points had been clear'd: Wherefore give me leave *now* to repreſent to you, as a Corollary from the foregoing diſcourſes, that nothing hinders but that we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that

the great and free Author of humane nature, God, ſo framed the nature of Man, as to have furniſh'd his Intellective Faculty with a light, whereby it cannot only make eſtimates of the power of a multitude of other things, but alſo judge of its own nature and power, and diſcern ſome at leaſt of the limits beyond which it cannot ſafely exerciſe its act of particularly and peremptorily judging and defining. And now that God, who (as I ſaid) is a moſt free Agent, may have given the mind of Man ſuch a limited nature, accompanied with ſuch a meaſure of light, you will not I preſume deny but the queſtion is, you will tell me, whether he *hath* done ſo? But I hope what has been formerly diſcourſed by theſe Gentlemen and me, has put that almoſt quite out of queſtion. However, I ſhall now invite you to obſerve with me, that the Rational Soul does not only paſs judgments about things without her, but about her ſelf, and what paſſes within her;

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She ſearches out and contemplates her own ſpirituality and union with the Body. The Intellect judges wherein its own nature conſiſts, and whether or no it ſelf be a diſtinct faculty from the Will; and to come yet cloſer to the point, be pleaſed to conſider, that Logick and Metaphyſicks are the works of the Humane Intellect, which by framing thoſe diſciplines, manifeſts, that it does not only judge of Ratiocinations, but of the very Principles and Laws of Reaſoning, and teaches what things are neceſſary to the obtaining of an Evidence and Certainty, and what kind of *Mediums* they are from whence you muſt not expect any demonſtrative Arguments, concerning ſuch or ſuch a ſubject. To theſe things it is agreeable, that if we will compare the bodily Eye with the Underſtanding, which is the Eye of the Mind, we muſt allow this difference, that the Intellect is as well a Looking-glaſs as a Senſory, ſince it does not only ſee other things but

it

it ſelf too, and can diſcern its own blemiſhes or bad conformation, or whatever other infirmitiesit labours under. Upon which conſideration, we may juſtifie the boldneſs of our excellent *Verulam*, who when he ſets forth the four ſorts of Idols (as he calls them) that miſlead the ſtudiers of Philoſophy, makes one of them to be *Idola Tribûs*, by which he means thoſe Notions, that tho' radicated in the very nature of mankind, are yet apt to miſlead us, which may confirm what I was ſaying before, that the Soul, when duly excited, is furniſhed with a light, that may enable her to judge even of divers of thoſe original Notions, by which ſhe is wont to judge of other things. To be ſhort, the Soul upon tryal may find by an inward ſence, that ſome things ſurpaſs her forces, as a blind man that were ſet to lift up a rock would quickly find it too unweildy to be manag'd by him, and the utmoſt exerciſe of his ſtrength would but convince him of the inſufficiency

of

of it, to ſurmount ſo great a weight or reſiſtance ; ſo that we do not pretend that the Eye of the Mind ſhould ſee Inviſibles, but only that it ſhall diſcern the limits of that Sphere of Activity, within which Nature hath bounded it, and conſequently that ſome Objects are diſproportionate to it. And I remember that *Ariſtotle* himſelf ſays, that the eye ſees both light and darkneſs, which expreſſion, though ſomewhat odd, may be defended by ſaying, that though ſince darkneſs is a Privation, not a Being, it cannot properly be the object of ſight, yet it may be perceived by means of the Eye, by the very differing affection which that Organ reſents, when it is impreſt on by luminous or enlightned Objects, and when it is made uſeleſs to us by darkneſs.

Timoth. What you have ſaid, *Sophronius*, has in great part prevented one thing that might be ſaid to ſtrengthen *Pyrocles* his objection, namely, that *whereas* when we ſee with our bodily eyes, there is beſides

ſides the outward Organ an internal and rational faculty, that perceives by the help of the eye, that which is not directly the object of ſight in the Eye of the Mind, the Intellect, there is but one faculty to perceive and judge: For according to your notion, it may be well anſwered, that the Intellect being capable by its proper light, to judge of it ſelf and its own acts as well as of other things, there is no need of two Principles, the one to perceive and the other to judge, ſince one is ſufficient for both thoſe purpoſes.

Pyrocl. When I have time to reflect on all that I have heard alledg'd amongſt you, Gentlemen, I ſhall conſider how far your Arguments ought to obtain my aſſent: But in the mean while I muſt tell you, that they will ſcarce have all the ſucceſs I preſume you deſire, unleſs you add ſomewhat to free me from what yet ſticks with me of a ſcruple, that is much of the nature of that which I formerly propoſed, being this; *How we can juſtifie our preſuming to diſcourſe*

diſcourſe at all of things tranſcending Reaſon? For I cannot underſtand how a man that admits your opinions, can intelligibly ſpeak (and to ſpeak otherwiſe miſ-becomes a rational creature) of what is infinite or any thing that ſurpaſſes our reaſon; ſince when we diſcourſe of ſuch things, either our words are, or are not accompanied with clear and diſtinct *Ideas* or conceptions of the things we ſpeak of: If *they be not*, what do we other than ſpeak nonſence, or (as hath been already ſaid) like Parrots entertain our Hearers with words, that we our ſelves do not underſtand; and if *they be*, then we do in effect *comprehend* thoſe things, which yet you would have me think to be on ſome account or other, *Incomprehenſible.*

Sophr. I acknowledge this difficulty, *Pyrocles*, to be a great one; but yet I think it not ſo great as that it ought to interdict us all diſcourſing of things above Reaſon: And this would perhaps appear probable enough, if, as your objection borrows

rows much of what you have formerly alledg'd, ſo I may be allowed, as well to repeat ſome things as propoſe others, in making anſwer to it.

Timoth. I for my part ſhall not only give you my conſent to do ſo, but make it my requeſt that you would do it, for when I look back upon our conference, methinks I plainly perceive that partly the objections of *Pyrocles*, and partly ſome (I fear impertinent) interpoſitions of mine, have kept your diſcourſe from being ſo methodical as otherwiſe you would have made it, and therefore to be reminded of ſome of the chief points of your doctrine, as well as to connect them with thoſe you ſhall judge fit to ſtrengthen or illuſtrate them, may much conduce to make us both underſtand it more clearly, and remember it better.

Eug. I am much of your mind, *Timotheus*, but though my interpoſitions have been far more frequent and much leſs pertinent than yours, yet I am not troubled that the

the method of our conference has been ſo much diſturb'd; becauſe I think ſuch a free way of diſcourſing, wherein emergent thoughts if they be conſiderable, are permitted to appear as they ariſe in the mind, is more uſeful than a nice method in a debate about an uncultivated and highly important ſubject, in which I think we ſhould aim at firſt rather to inquire than to reſolve, and to procure as many hints and conſiderations as we can, in order to our fuller information againſt our next meeting, without ſuppreſſing any that is true or uſeful, only becauſe it agrees not ſo well with a regular method, as it does with the deſign of our conference.

Sophr. Without reflecting upon either of thoſe Gentlemen that have been pleaſed to accuſe themſelves, I ſhall readily comply with the motion made by *Timotheus*, and after having propoſed ſome diſtinctions make application of them.

And the better to clear this matter in reference to *Pyrocles*'s objection,

on, I ſhall firſt take the liberty to make ſome diſtinctions of the Notions or conceptions of the Mind, and for brevity ſake give names to thoſe I have now occaſion to employ. I conſider then, that whether the conceptions or *Ideas* we have of things be ſimple or compounded, they may be diſtinguiſhed into ſuch as are particular or *diſtinct*, and ſuch as are only general, dark, and confus'd, or indiſtinct: So when a Navigator to unknown Countries firſt gets a ſight of Land, though he may be ſatisfied that it is Land, yet he has but a very dark and confus'd picture of it made in his eye, and cannot deſcry whether or no the ſhore be rocky, or what Creeks or Harbours (if any) it have in it; much leſs whether the Coaſt be well inhabited, and if it be, what kind of buildings it has; all which he may plainly and diſtinctly ſee upon his going aſhore. And this mention of the Sea puts me in mind to point at another diſtinction, which is that of ſome things we

have an *adequate*, of others, but an *inadequate* conception; as if we ſuppoſe the Navigator I was ſpeaking of, ſhould look towards the main Sea, though he might ſee a good way diſtinctly, yet at length it would appear ſo darkly and confuſedly to him, that at the verge of the ſenſible Horizon, his ſight would make him judge that the Sea and Sky come together, and yet he would conclude that the utmoſt part of the Sea he could deſcry, was but a part of the Ocean, which may, for ought he knows, reach to a vaſt extent beyond the viſible Horizon.

To our confuſed, and often alſo to our inadequate conceptions, belong many of thoſe that may be called Negative, which we are wont to imploy when we ſpeak of Privations or Negations, as Blindneſs, Ignorance, Death, *&c.* We have a poſitive *Idea* of things that are ſquare and round, and black and white, and in ſhort of other things, whoſe ſhapes and colours make

them the objects of our sight: Bu
when we say, for instance, that
Spirit or an Atome is invisible
those words are attended with a ne
gative conception, which is com
monly but dark and confused be
cause 'tis indefinite, and remove
or lays aside those marks, by whic
we are wont clearly to perceive an
distinguish visible substances: An
when we say that such a thing i
impossible, we have some kind o
conception of what we speak of, bu
'tis a very obscure and indistinc
one at best, exhibiting only a gen
ral and very confused representa
on of some ways, whereby o
might think the thing likely to b
effected if it were at all perform
ble, accompanied with a percep
on of the insufficiency of tho
ways. There is yet another diff
rence in the notions we have
things, which though not wont
be observed, is too important to b
here pretermitted, and it is thi
That of some things we have
knowledg, that for want of a fit
ten

term may be called primary or direct, and of ſome other things the knowledge we have is acquired but by inferring it from ſome more known or clearer truth; and ſo may be called inferr'd or illative knowledge. As when a Geometrician defines to me an *Hyperbole*, I quickly gain a clear and diſtinct *Idea* of it, but when he proves to me that this *Hyperbole* may have ſuch a relation to a ſtrait line which he calls *Aſymptote*, that this line being continued ſtill comes nearer and nearer to the prolonged ſide of the *Hyperbole*, and yet how far ſoever both be drawn, 'twill never come to touch it, his ſubtil demonſtrations preſent me with an infer'd or illative truth, at which we arriv'd not but by the help of a train of ratiocinations, and on which if we exerciſe our imagination, we ſhall find this factitious truth, if we may ſo call it, accompanied but with a very dim and confuſed *Idea*. To the foregoing diſtinctions, give me leave to add but this one more,

which belongs chiefly to the no
ons we have of true or falſe propo
tions, namely, that of our concep
ons of things, ſome are *Symmetri*
(if I may ſo call them) or every w
conſiſtent, by which I mean tho
that have theſe two qualificatio
the *one* that all the parts are conſi
ent among themſelves, and the
ther that the entire *Idea* is conſi
ent with all other truths; and ſo
are *Chymerical* or *Aſymmetrical*,
which I underſtand thoſe that a
either ſelf-deſtroying by the cont
riety of the parts themſelves th
are made up of, as if one ſho
talk of a triangular ſquare, or a S
ſhiny night; *or* being extravaga
lead to ſome manifeſt abſurdi
that may be legitimately infer
from them, or into inextrica
difficulties, or involve a real rep
nancy to ſome acknowledg'd tru
or rule of Reaſon.

To what I have hitherto ſaid
muſt add theſe two obſervatio
The Firſt, that the mind of Ma
ſo framed, that when ſhe is d
inſtruc

inſtructed and is not wanting to her ſelf, ſhe can perceive a want of light in her ſelf for ſome purpoſes, or of clearneſs and completeneſs in the beſt *Idæas* ſhe is able to frame of ſome things, and on this account can ſo far take notice of the extent and imperfection of her own faculties, as to diſcern that ſome objects are diſproportionate to her; As when we attentively conſider the dimenſions of ſpace, or (if the Carteſians judge aright, that body is nothing but extended ſubſtance) thoſe of the Univerſe, we may by tryal perceive that we cannot conceive them ſo great, but that they may be yet greater, or if you pleaſe may exceed the bounds, how remote ſoever, which our former conception preſum'd to aſſign them; which may be illuſtrated by what happens to the eye, when it looks upon the main Sea; ſince we eaſily grow ſenſible that how far ſoever we can diſcover it, yet our ſight falls far ſhort of the extent of that vaſt object. And 'tis by the ſenſe

which the mind has of her own I
mitedneſs and imperfection on ce
tain occaſions, that I think we m
eſtimate what things ought no
and what ought to be looked upo
as *Things above Reaſon*; for by th
Term, I would not have you thi
I mean ſuch things as our ration
faculty cannot at all reach to,
has not any kind of perception o
for of ſuch things we cannot in pa
ticular either ſpeak or think li
men: But my meaning is this, th
whereas the rational Soul is conſ
ous to her own acts, and feels, th
ſhe knows divers ſorts of thin
truly and clearly; and thereby ju
ly concludes them to be within t
compaſs of her faculties; when ſh
contemplates ſome few things th
ſeem to be of another order, ſhe
convinc'd that however ſhe ſtra
her power, ſhe has no ſuch *Id*
or perception of them, as ſhe h
or may have of thoſe objects th
are not diſproportionate to her
culties: And this is my firſt Obſ
vation.

The other thing that I was to obſerve about the nature of the Mind is, that 'tis ſo conſtituted, that its faculty of drawing conſequences from known truths, is of greater extent than its power of framing clear and diſtinct *Idæas* of things; ſo that by ſubtle or ſucceſſive inferences, it may attain to a clear conviction that ſome things *are*, of whoſe nature and properties (or at leaſt of ſome of them) it can frame no clear and ſatisfactory conceptions. And that men ſhould be better able to infer propoſitions about divers things, than to penetrate their nature, needs the leſs be wondred at, *both* becauſe 'tis oftentimes ſufficient for our uſes to know that ſuch things are, though that knowledge be not accompanied with a clear and diſtinct *Idæa*; and becauſe oftentimes the Rules (ſuch as, *whatever is produced muſt have a cauſe*; and, *from Truth, nothing rightly follows but Truth*) are clear and eaſie that enable the Mind to infer concluſions about things, whoſe nature

is very dark, and abſtruſe.

Eug. I know, *Sophronius*, that you have not laid down theſe preliminary diſtinctions and remarks without deſigning to make uſe of them, which the little time that now remains to manage our conference in, calls upon you to proceed to do.

Sophr. I was juſt going to ſay, *Eugenius*, that after what I have premiſed, I hope it may now be ſeaſonable to apply the newly delivered Notions to the three ſorts of things that I formerly repreſented as being in ſome ſence *above reaſon*. For I conſider, that there are ſome objects of ſo immenſe and peculiar a nature, that (if I may ſo ſpeak) by an eaſie view of the mind, that is without any ſubtle and laborious diſquiſition, the Soul diſcerns, and as it were feels the Object to be diſproportionate to her powers: And accordingly if ſhe thinks fit to try, ſhe quickly finds her ſelf unable to frame conceptions of them fit to be acquieſc'd in, and this ſort of Objects

jects I do upon that account call inconceivable, or (on ſome occaſions) *ſupra-intellectual.*

But when by attentively conſidering the attributes and operations of things, we ſometimes find that a thing hath ſome property belonging to it, or doth perform ſomewhat, which by reflecting on the beings and ways of working that we know already, we cannot diſcern to be reducible to them or derivable from them, we then conclude this property or this operation to be *inexplicable*; that is, ſuch as that it cannot ſo much as in a general way be intelligibly accounted for, and this makes the ſecond ſort of our things above Reaſon. But this is not all, for the Rational Soul that is already furniſhed with innate, or at leaſt primitive *Idæas* and Rules of true and falſe, when ſhe comes to examine certain things and make ſucceſſive inferences about them, ſhe finds (ſometimes to her wonder as well as trouble) that ſhe cannot avoid admitting ſome con-

conſequences as true & good which ſhe is not able to reconcile to ſome other manifeſt Truth or acknowledged Propoſition: And whereas other Truths are ſo harmonious, that there is no diſagreement between any two of them, the Heteroclite Truths I ſpeak of appear not ſymmetrical with the reſt of the body of Truths, and we ſee not how we can at once embrace theſe and the reſt, without admitting that grand abſurdity which ſubverts the very foundation of our reaſonings, *That Contradictories may both be true.* As in the controverſie about the endleſs diviſibility of a ſtrait line, ſince 'tis manifeſt that a line of three foot for inſtance is thrice as long as a line of one foot, ſo that the ſhorter line is but the third part of the longer, it would follow that a part of a line may contain as many parts as a whole, ſince each of them is diviſible into infinite parts, which ſeems repugnant to common ſence, and to contradict one of thoſe common Notions in *Euclid*, whereon

Geometry

Geometry it ſelf is built. Upon which account I have ventured to call this third ſort of things above Reaſon *Aſymmetrical* or *Unſociable*, of which eminent inſtances are afforded us by thoſe controverſies (ſuch as that of the *compoſitio continui)* wherein which ſide ſoever of the queſtion you take, you will be unable *directly* and truly to anſwer the objections that may be urged to ſhow that you contradict ſome primitive or ſome other acknowledged truth.

Theſe, *Eugenius*, are ſome of the conſiderations by which I have been induced to diſtinguiſh the things that to me ſeem to overmatch our Reaſon, into three kinds. For of thoſe things I have ſtil'd *Unconceivable*, our *Idæas* are but ſuch as a moderate attention ſuffices to make the mind ſenſible that ſhe wants either light or extent enough to have a clear and full comprehenſion of them: And thoſe things that I have called *Inexplicable*, are thoſe which we cannot perceive to depend

upon the *Idæas* we are furniſhed with, and to reſemble in their manner of working any of the Agents whoſe nature we are acquainted with: And laſtly, thoſe things which I have named *Unſociable*, are ſuch as have Notions belonging to them, or have concluſions deducible from them, that are (for ought we can diſcern) *either* incongruous to our primitive *Idæas*, *or* when they are driven home, inconſiſtent with the manifeſt Rules we are furniſhed with, to judge of True and Falſe.

Eug. I preſume, *Sophronius*, that by ſorting things above Reaſon into three kinds, you do not intend to deny but that 'tis poſſible one object may in differing regards be referred to more than one of theſe ſorts.

Sophr. You apprehend me very right, *Eugenius*, and the truth of what you ſay may ſufficiently appear in that nobleſt of Objects, God.

Timoth. We owe ſo much to God, the moſt perfect of Beings,

not

not only for other bleſſings, but for thoſe very Intellects that enable us to contemplate him, that I ſhall be very glad to learn any thing that may increaſe my wonder and veneration for an Object, to whom I can never pay enough of either.

Sophr. You ſpeak like your ſelf, *Timotheus*, and I wiſh I were as able as I ought to be willing, to ſatisfie your deſire: But ſince we are now diſcourſing like Philoſophers, not Divines, I ſhall proceed to ſpeak of that glorioufeſt of Objects, But as his Nature or ſome of his Attributes afford me inſtances to the purpoſe, for which I preſum'd to mention him. *When* God therefore made the World out of nothing, or (if *Pyrocles* will not admit the Creation) *when* he diſcerns the ſecreteſt thoughts and intentions of the Mind, *when* he unites an immaterial Spirit to a humane Body, and maintains, perhaps for very many years, that unparallel'd union with all the wonderful conditions he has annex'd to it; *when*, I ſay, he doth

theſe

theſe and many other things, that I muſt not now ſtay to mention, he ſupplies us with inſtances of things that are *Inexplicable*: For ſuch operations are not reducible to any of the ways of working known to us; ſince our own Minds can but modify *themſelves* by divers manners of thinking; and as for things without us, all that one body can do to another by acting on it, is to communicate local motion to it, and thereby produce in it the natural conſequences of ſuch motion; in all which there is no action like any of thoſe I juſt now aſcrib'd to God. And if we conſider that the præſcience of thoſe future events that we call contingent, being a perfection, is not to be denyed to God; who is by all acknowledged the perfecteſt of Beings, and that yet the greateſt Wits that have laboured to reconcile this infallible præcognition with the liberty of mans will, have been reduced to maintain ſome thing or other, that thwarts ſome acknowledged truth

or

or dictate of Reaſon: If we duly conſider this (I ſay) it will afford us an inſtance of truths, whoſe conſiſtency and whoſe ſymmetry with the body of other truths, our Reaſon cannot diſcern, and which therefore ought to be referred to that ſort of things above Reaſon, that I call *Unſociable*. And now I come to the third ſort of theſe things which is that I formerly mention'd, firſt under the name of *Incomprehenſible* or *ſupra*-intellectual: which Title, whether or no it belongs to any other Object, (which I will not now enquire) doth certainly belong to *God*, whoſe Nature comprehending all perfections in their utmoſt poſſible degrees, is not like to be comprehenſible by our minds, who altogether want *divers* of thoſe perfections, and have but moderate meaſures, (not to call them ſhadows) of *the reſt*. We are indeed born with, or at leaſt have a power and divers occaſions to frame an *Idæa* of a Being infinitely perfect, and by this *Idæa* we may ſuffi-

ſufficiently diſcriminate the Origi-
nal of it, God, from all other Ob-
jects whatſoever. But then, when
we come to conſider attentively &
minutely what is contained in the
notion of Omnipotence, Omniſci-
ence, Eternity, and thoſe other
divine Attributes that are all united
in that great confluence and abyſs
of perfections, God; we may be
ſure to find, that our faculties are
exceedingly ſurmounted by the
vaſtneſs and glorioufneſs of that
unlimited and *unparallel'd* object
about which, *as* we can diſcover
that it *exiſts*, and that it poſſeſſes
all the perfection we can conceive
ſo we may at the ſame time diſcern
that it muſt have *degrees of perfecti-
on*, which becauſe of the inferiority
of our Nature, we are not able to
conceive.

And yet this diſcovery of God's
Incomprehenſibleneſs may be made
without ſubtle diſquiſitions, and
without trains of conſequences
though not without due attention
by a direct view of the Mind (if
may

may ſo term it;) who finds her ſelf upon tryal as unable fully to meaſure *the divine perfections* as the *dimenſions of ſpace*, which we can conceive to be greater and greater, without ever being able to determine any extent beyond whoſe limits they cannot reach.

Pyrocles. I ſuſpected *Sophron.* by the tenour of your Diſcourſe that the laſt Queſtions theſe Gentlemen asked you, diverted you from ſaying ſomewhat more than you did by way of application of your preceding Diſcourſe.

Sophron. I was then indeed about to make, as I now ſhall, this uſe of what I had been ſaying; that I readily acknowledge that 'tis an arrogance to talk of infinite or of priviledg'd things, with the ſame confidence, or to pretend to do it with the ſame clearneſs, wherewith knowing men may ſpeak of things unqueſtionably within the compaſs of our Intellect: But that this need not hinder us from ſpeaking, nor doth

diſable us from ſpeaking rationally of priviledg'd things themſelves. For all the notions that are allowable are not of the ſame ſort or order; and if none were to be admitted but thoſe that enable us to comprehend the Object, that is, which give us a clear and diſtinct knowledge of all that it contains or that belongs to it, I muſt confeſs that we have no good Notions of priviledg'd things in particular: but then I muſt add, that I fear we have few or none even of many things that we think our ſelves very knowing in. And when we ſpeak of things as being *above Reaſon*, though we have no clear, diſtinct and adequate Notion of them, yet we may have a general confus'd and inadequate Notion of them, which may ſuffice to make us diſcriminate their reſpective Objects from all elſe, and from one another; as may be obſerv'd in ſeveral *Idæas* that are negatively fram'd, ſuch as thoſe we have of *invisible*, *incomprehenſible*, and

in others which I formerly call'd *Inferr'd*; becauſe they accompany the remote Inferences whereby one truth is concluded from another: as when Geometricians infer from ſome propoſitions in Euclid that any ſtrait line may be divided farther and farther without ſtop. For of this and ſome other propoſitions about priviledg'd things, we are not quite deſtitute of allowable Notions; as may appear by *ſome* of the admirably ingenious Speculations of Mathematicians about the Affections of *ſurd Numbers*, and about *incommenſurable Magnitudes*; about ſome of which we have no ſuch clear and ſymmetrical Conceptions as we have of many other things, that are of a nearer and more intelligible order. And on this occaſion I ſhall not ſcruple to acknowledge, that partly by my own Experience, and partly by the Confeſſions of others, and by their unſucceſful Attempts, I am induc'd to think that God, who is a moſt free Agent, having

been pleas'd to make Intelligent Beings, may perhaps have made them of differing Ranks, or Orders, whereof Men may not be of the Principal; and that whether there be ſuch Orders or no, he hath at leaſt made us Men, of a limited nature (in general) and of a bounded Capacity. Congruouſly to this I think alſo, that he hath furniſhed man either with certain innate *Ideas* or Models and Principles, or with a Faculty or Power and Diſpoſition eaſily to frame them, as it meets with occaſions (which readily occur) to excite them: But becauſe that (as I lately noted) God intended the mind of Man but of a limited Capacity, his Underſtanding is ſo conſtituted that the inbred or eaſily acquir'd *Idæas* and primitive Axioms wherewith it is furniſhed, and by Relation or Analogy whereunto it judges of all other Notions, and Propoſitions, do not extend to all knowable Objects whatſoever; but reach only to ſuch as have a ſufficient Affinity,

or

or bear ſome proportion to thoſe Primary *Idæas* and Rules of Truth, which are ſufficient if duly improv'd, to help us to the attainment, though not of the perfect knowledge of truth's of the higheſt Orders, yet to the Competent Knowledge of as much truth as God thought fit to allow our minds in their preſent (and perchance laps'd) Condition, or ſtate of Union with their mortal Bodies.

Eugen. Your Opinion, *Sophron.* if I apprehend it aright, contains two very differing Aſſertions; one that it is allowable to contemplate and even to diſcourſe of things *above Reaſon*, ſince we may have ſome Conceptions of them, though they be but very dim and imperfect: and *the other*, that we ought not to look upon, or ſpeak of ſuch Objects as things that we *comprehend*, or have even ſuch a meaſure of knowledge of, as we have of things that are not priviledg'd. For of theſe we are not to ſpeak but with a peculiar Wari-

neſs, and modeſt Diffidence.

Sophron. You have expreſs'd my thoughts *Eugen.* ſince I Intend not to injoyn ſilence, or diſſwade Curioſity, but yet forbid preſumption, in reference to priviledg'd things.

Timoth. And truly *Sophron.* I ſee no Reaſon to repine at the limits which your late Diſcourſe hath in imitation of the Author of nature himſelf, aſſign'd to human Knowledg. For the number of priviledg'd things is altogether inconſiderable in compariſon of the multitude of other things, to which our knowledge may be improv'd to reach; and which it far more concerns us to know well, than it doth to reſolve puzling Queſtions about things incomprehenſible; there being within the compaſs of thoſe truths, enough to employ, and reward our Curioſity without ſtraining and tiring our Reaſon about Objects that tranſcend it. And yet even about *theſe*, ſome diſquiſitions may be allow'd us, for an

object that on the account of ſome of its properties may be a priviledg'd one; may have divers other things belonging to it, that do not ſurpaſs our Reaſon, and whoſe knowledge may therefore be attain'd, by the due employment of it.

Thus we uſefully ſtudy the nature of Bodies, which make up the Object of the Excellent Science of Natural Philoſophy; though the true Notion of Body in general be a thing ſo difficult to frame, that the beſt of our Modern Philoſophers can by no means agree about it. Which I do not wonder at; becauſe if we purſue the notion of a Body to the uttermoſt; 'twill lead us to the perplexing controverſie, *De compoſitione continui*, and there you will not deny, but that the underſtanding will be left in the dark. Thus Surveyors, Carpenters, Architects, and many others know divers *Affections* of the ſquare Figure that are of great uſe to them in their reſpective Employments,

though that *property* of the ſquare, that *its ſide and diagonal are incommenſurable*, be unknown to moſt of them; and if they were told of it, and would proſecute the Speculation, would involve them in exceeding great and probably inſuperable difficulties.

Sophron. To confirm what you have been telling us, *Timoth.* I ſhall venture to add, that even about priviledg'd things, our inquiries, if modeſtly and diſcreetly manag'd, may not only be allowable but ſometimes profitable. For even of ſuch Subjects a ſtudious ſearch may bring us to know more than we did, though not ſo much as we would, nor enough to be acquieſc'd in. So that ſuch enquiries may probably teach us, to know the Objects better, and our ſelves better too; by giving us ſuch a ſenſible diſcovery of the inſufficiency of our Underſtandings to comprehend all ſorts of things, as may be very uſeful, though not pleaſing, and may richly recompence

pence us, for the pains that ended in ſo inſtructive a diſappointment. And let me add to the pertinent inſtances that have been mention'd, the nobleſt that can be given; I mean the Contemplation of God himſelf. For he hath ſo ordered all things, that 'tis ſcarce poſſible for us, to be deſtitute of an *Idæa* of him, which will at leaſt repreſent him as an *exiſtent Being*, and more *perfect* than any other Being; and yet when we come with ſufficient Application of mind to pry into the wonderful Attributes of this moſt ſingular and adorable Being, we are, as was lately obſerv'd, ſure to find our ſelves unable to comprehend ſo unbounded an Object. Which yet ought not to diſcourage us from ſo noble a Study, ſince we are allow'd the great contentment and honour to make further and further diſcoveries of the excellenteſt of Objects, by that very *immenſity* of his perfections, that makes it impoſſible for us to reach to the bounds

of

of his Excellency, or rather to discover that it has any bounds at all.

But, Gentlemen, I perceive I have been so transported by the mention of this vast and divine Subject, in whose Contemplation 'tis so easie, and so pleasant to lose ones self, that I have forgot the notice *Eugen.* gave me, a pretty while since, that the time allotted for our present conference was then near expiring. And therefore I shall leave you to pick out of the Excursions to which your interpositions tempted (not to say oblig'd) me, the Applications, that I intended to make more methodically of the distinctions I laid down. And I am the less troubled to be hindred from proposing to you my thoughts about the way of distinguishing privileg'd things from others, because we have a domestick Monitor, or a kind of an internal *Criterium* always at hand to help us. For I think it may well be said, that the wise Author of Nature has endued the Understanding

ſtanding with ſuch a quick, though internal, Senſation (if I may ſo call it) that when due attention is not wanting, it can feelingly diſcern between other Objects, and thoſe that are diſproportionate to its ability. As even in Beaſts, the eye is ſo fram'd (according to the inſtitution of Nature) that if it be obverted to the bright noon-day-Sun, there needs no Monitor, but the operation of the ſame Sun, to make it wink; (and perhaps water) and thereby diſcover it ſelf to be dazled and overpowr'd by the diſproportionate Object.

Pyroc. I confeſs your Diſcourſes, Gentlemen, have made an unexpected Impreſſion upon me; but whether that will amount to a Conviction will ſcarce appear till our next Conference. Only thus much I ſhall tell you now, that it would much facilitate our agreement in Opinion, if you did not contend for altogether ſo much; but would be pleas'd to leave it undetermin'd, whether Man's intellectual

tellectual *Faculty it ſelf* is uncapable by the help of any degree of light, to diſcover and know thoſe things, which you call above Reaſon? and would content your ſelves to ſay, That there are ſome things belonging to theſe Subjects, which we muſt confeſs we have leſs clear and diſtinct Notions of, than we have even of the difficulteſt of thoſe things, that are acknowledg'd not to ſurpaſs our Reaſon: And that if we will take upon us, to determine poſitively and particularly about theſe tranſcendent things, we muſt employ ways of Reaſoning, congruous to their peculiar natures.

Sophron. I ſhall readily conſent not to expect your final Reſolution, before our next meeting, having no cauſe to fear that time, will be unfriendly to her Daughter Truth.

Timoth. And in the mean while, *Pyrocles*, I am glad to find by the laſt part of what you juſt now ſaid, that you ſeem to be no longer indiſpos'd to admit ſome things, that

(at

(at leaſt in our preſent ſtate) do ſome way or other ſurpaſs our Reaſon. For I think that inſtead of *exalting* that faculty, we injure and *defraud* it, if we do not freely allow it, as much enjoyment of Truth as we are able to procure it: And conſequently if Geometry, or Revelation, or Experience, aſſure us of divers things of which we can know but *That they are*, and *what they do*, not, *what they are*, and *how they act*, we muſt neither refuſe, nor neglect the ſtudy of ſuch Truths, any more than we would refuſe *to look into* any other Objects, than thoſe that we can *look through*; And therefore to enrich the Intellect as much as we are able, we muſt entertain, not only thoſe Truths, that we can *comprehend*, but thoſe alſo, how ſublime ſoever, that we can have any *certain*, though but a very imperfect *Knowledge* of, Eſpecially ſince thoſe remote and abſtruſe Subjects may be as much more *noble* as more *dark* than others,

thers, and thereby render an imperfect Diſcovery of them, more deſirable, than a far clearer one of Inferior things.

FINIS.

ADVICES IN JUDGING OF Things SAID TO TRANSCEND REASON.

The Speakers *Arnobius*, *Eugenius*, *Pyrocles* and *Timotheus*.

Arnob. I Was very glad, Gentlemen, to learn this morning of *Sophronius* ſome things, whence 'twas eaſie to conclude, that by the Diſcourſe you had with him

him laſt night, he has made it allowable for *me* to demand, and rational for *you* to *grant*, nay to *proffer* me, a Diſpenſation of the Task you impoſed on me at our laſt meeting. For tho' he ſpake with the modeſty that became him of your Conference, and gave me, but a haſty and imperfect Account of what paſs'd between you; yet I think I may preſume, that by his Diſcourſe *Pyrocles* himſelf was at leaſt *inclin'd*, and you two, Gentlemen, fully *perſwaded* to admit, *that there are Things above Reaſon*; which was the main point about which you expected at our laſt Congreſs that I ſhould entertain you, at our then next, or now preſent meeting.

Eugen. I deny not, that *Sophronius*'s Conſiderations were prevalent on *Timotheus* and me; and have, I hope, made a good impreſſion on *Pyrocles* himſelf; but that ought not to hinder us from coming, as we now do, to claim your promiſe of entertaining us about *things above Reaſon*. And if you

you will needs be diſpens'd with from repeating thoſe Conſiderations that *Sophronius* has employed already, (tho' I doubt not but by repeating them, you would both ſtrengthen and advance them;) we will not be rigid Exactors of our Right: but yet we muſt not *remit* your Task, tho' we are content to *change* it. For I queſtion not but theſe Gentlemen will conſent with me, to diſcharge you of your promiſe of diſcourſing of the *Arguments* that may infer ſome things to be above Reaſon, if you will pleaſe to afford us your Thoughts, about the *ways* of avoiding to be impoſed on by our ſelves or others, when ſuch ſublime Subjects are treated or diſcours'd of.

Arnob. Tho' in the recital of your Conference, *Sophronius* did but *touch* on ſeveral Subjects whereon it would be proper for me to *inſiſt*, in the Diſcourſe you ſeem to expect from me; yet I am apt to fear, that he has ſo prevented me in what I ſhould ſay, that he

has left little or nothing for *me* to do, but to make Repetitions of what you have heard already much better expreſs'd: which will be an Employment far enough from being grateful, either to you or me.

Eugen. Your Modeſty, Sir, is not like to defeat our Curioſity; and that you may not think your ſelf hardly uſed, or condemned to bear Repetitions; be pleaſed to take notice, both that, what we *deſire* as a *Favor*, we might *claim* as a *Compenſation*, and that the things we expect from you now, are not Arguments to make out that there are *things above Reaſon*, but that you would afford us ſome "*Rules* and Directions how to re-"gulate the *Ratiocinations* we "make; and eſtimate thoſe we "meet *with*, *about* ſuch Tranſcen-"dent Subjects.

Arnob. I hope *Eugenius*, you do not in earneſt think me ſo vain as to pretend to frame a Logick about things above Logick; or magiſterially

giſterially to deliver Rules about things that are as Anomalous, as they are either Remote or Abſtruſe. Beſides that all you have ſaid, do's not exempt me from a fear, that by reaſon of *Sophronius*'s omitting divers points of his Diſcourſe, and my imperfect Remembrance of thoſe he tranſiently and ſummarily mention'd, he has anticipated much of what were otherwiſe proper for me to ſay. But yet becauſe 'tis poſſible that his thoughts and mine, may have lead us, to have made ſome Reflections that are not at all the ſame; and that even when others happen to be coincident, it may be not altogether uſeleſs, that I ſhould endeavour to *inlarge* ſome things that he has but *hinted*, and illuſtrate or vindicate ſome others that will not be prejudic'd by being cleared, or confirm'd; and above all this, becauſe I would ſhew you, that I am willing to comply with you ſomewhat to the hazard of my Diſcretion, I ſhall not refuſe to offer you

ſome, not *Rules*, but *Advices*; provided you freely interrupt me, when I begin to trouble you with the Repetition of any thing that you have, tho' I have not heard before; and provided too, that you look not on theſe *Advices* ſo much as directions to find the truth in ſuch abſtruſe matters, as *Cautions* that may chance to aſſiſt you to avoid ſome Errors and Miſtakes.

Eugen. We are not ſo ſcrupulous but that we ſhall upon your own terms gladly receive your thoughts, whatever names you pleaſe to give them.

Arnob. I ſhall then without further preamble comply with your Commands, and propoſe as my

Firſt Advice.

That about Priviledg'd Subjects themſelves, we do not admit any (affirmative) aſſertion without ſuch proofs, to evince it, as are ſufficient in their kind.

I hope

I hope Gentlemen that *Sophronius* has ſo far declar'd to you, what is to be meant by *Priviledg'd things*, that though it be a new term, yet I need not ſolicitouſly explain it; and may think it ſufficient to intimate in few words that they are things of a very Heteroclyte and Abſtruſe Nature, and have belonging to them ſuch *peculiar Affections and Attributes*, as require that in judging and reaſoning of them we ſhould employ Notions and Rules congruous to their *particular Condition*; ſome of them ſuperadded *to*, & others perhaps differing *from*, thoſe that men generally & ſafely enough make uſe of about common & familiar things, that are of a nature leſs impervious to our Underſtandings. And if the ſhortneſs of this Summary Deſcription, ſhould leave it leſs clear than I hope you find it; I foreſee there will divers occaſions of illuſtrating it, by inſtances and other ways, occur in the Sequel of our Diſcourſe: In order to which I ſhall, after this ſhort

and neceſſary Digreſſion, return to the lately given *Firſt Advice*; and tell you that 'tis grounded upon this Conſideration, that 'tis not reaſonable to give aſſent to any thing as a Truth, but upon a ſufficient Reaſon of that Aſſent. And tho' we may well grant in the general, that a thing which ſurpaſſes our Reaſon *may have* belonging to it ſome affection that is alſo above Reaſon; yet we are not in particular to believe that this or that Affection *doth belong* to it, without particular and competent proof. For ſince about a Priviledg'd thing, as well as about any other, Propoſitions may be fram'd, and often are ſo, that are contrary to one another; to aſſent to both, were to be ſure to believe one falſity, if not two. And if we will aſſent but to one, we muſt either judge at Adventures, or allow our ſelves to examine the *Mediums* of Probation, employed on both ſides, and thereupon judge, why one of the Propoſitions is to be aſſented to, and the other rejected.

Py-

Pyrocles. I am glad *Arnobius*, that you allow your ſelf and us this manly freedom without which our Underſtandings were lyable to be impos'd on in matters of the higheſt Concernment: For there ſcarce ever did, or I fear ever will, want ſome men who *either* out of Ignorance and paſſive Deluſion, *or* out of ſelf-Confidence, *or* out of Deſign, take upon them, with great boldneſs, to affirm what they pleaſe about *priviledg'd Subjects*, and when they are oppoſed in their Extravagancies by Ratiocinations they cannot anſwer, they urge, that theſe things being above Reaſon, are not to be judged of by it: But of ſuch men as theſe I uſually demand whether their own Aſſent to the things they would have us believe, be grounded upon ſome Rational Argument, or not: If they ſay, 'tis not, they are fools to believe it themſelves; and I ſhould add to the number of fools, if after this acknowledgment, I ſhould believe them: But if they ſay they do, I deſire them

to

to produce their Argument; for ſince 'tis fram'd by a Human Underſtanding, the force of it may be alſo comprehended & judg'd of by a Human Underſtanding: And 'tis to no purpoſe to ſay, that the Subject ſurpaſſes Human Reaſon; for if it do ſo indeed, it will ſurpaſs theirs as well as mine, and ſo leave us upon even terms. And let the thing aſſented to, be what it will, the aſſent it ſelf ought to be founded upon a ſufficient Reaſon, and conſequently upon one that is intelligible, to the Human Intellect that is wrought on by it.

Eûgen. I willingly allow, that there is a great difference between the being able and oblig'd to know the nature or cauſe of a thing, and the being able to give an intelligible account of the motives that induce our aſſent to it; and without ſuch motives the aſſent may by chance be given to what is a truth, but that will not hinder it from being an irrational Aſſent.

Timoth. I was not ill pleas'd *Arnobius*,

nobius, with the Caution you employ'd in the close of your Advice, where, by saying that the positive Proofs you require to evince an Assertion about a priviledg'd thing, must be *sufficient in their Kind*, you plainly intimate that you do not exact rigid Demonstrations of such Assertions: And indeed it were not reasonable you should; for since 'tis manifest, that there are many Truths, such as Historical and Political ones, that by the nature of the things are not capable of Mathematical or Metaphysical Demonstrations, and yet being really Truths, have a just Title to our Assent, it must be acknowledg'd, that a rational Assent may be founded upon Proofs that reach not to rigid Demonstrations, it being sufficient that they are strong enough to deserve a wise mans Acquiescence in them. And therefore if any things can be made out to be reveal'd by God concerning his own Nature, or Actions, or Decrees, we ought firmly to believe them

them, becauſe that, of ſome of thoſe things, as his Præſcience, Mercy, *&c.* We can have no *better* Proofes; and of others, as what he did before our World was made; and what he will do with us after we are dead, we can have no *other* conſiderable Proofes at all. And the Objection made by *Pyrocles* againſt the aſſenting to audacious Propoſitions fram'd by impoſing Men, will not reach our Caſe: for there is no reaſon to think, that becauſe an Object ſurpaſſes an humane Underſtanding, it muſt therefore ſurpaſs the Divine Intellect it ſelf. And even in things that are tranſacted in the Mind of Man himſelf; I may learn from another that is not my Superior, what I can by no means attain to know, unleſs he be pleaſed to diſcover it to me: As that he was at ſuch a time, thinking of the Creation of the World, or reſolving how to diſpoſe of his Son, and what Recompence he deſigns to give a Servant that he has not yet entertained. *Pyrocles*

Pyrocles. About things of ſuch a kind as you now mention, *Timotheus*, I ſhall not diſſent from you; becauſe theſe are things, that tho' not diſcoverable by our Reaſon *till* we be informed of them, are yet clearly knowable by our Reaſon, *when* we are informed of them. But that there ſhould be things, which tho' perſpicuouſly propoſed, ſhould not be comprehenſible by our underſtanding, is ſuch an affront to that noble Faculty, that I confeſs it has much indiſpoſed me to grant (what I am yet unwilling *peremptorily* to deny,) that there are, as *Sophronius* would have us think, not only *ſome* priviledged things, but *more than one kind* of them; which if we do admit, it will place ſuch narrow Limits to our Underſtandings, that we muſt deſpair of the deſireableſt knowledge of all, namely that which is converſant about the nobleſt and ſublimeſt Objects.

Eugenius. Leaving to *Sophronius* the management of a Point he has ſtudied, and which I have not now

now time ſolemnly to Argue; I ſhall only tell you in general that I ſee no neceſſity, That Intelligibility to a *humane Underſtanding*, ſhould be neceſſary to the Truth or Exiſtence of a thing; any more then that Viſibility to a *Humane* Eye, ſhould be neceſſary to the Exiſtence of an Atome, or of a Corpuſcle of Air, or of the *Effluvium's* of a Loadſtone, or the Fragrant Exhalations of *Ambergris*, and Musk from a perfumed Glove; I might here obſerve, that even by the ſame Sence ſome Creatures may diſcern things that may not be perceptible to others: as no attention or application of the Organ (or the Noſe) will inable *a man* to perceive the *Effluvia* expiring from the ſtale Footſteps of a hunted and unſeen Hare or Dear, tho' *Hounds*, and eſpecially Blood-hounds, will have a vivid Preception of ſuch Odours, and by their help, trace and perſue the flying and unſeen Beaſt. This, I ſay, may be obſerved in Favour of my preſent

ſent Argument; but 'twill perhaps be a more proper illuſtration to repreſent, that the natural Incapacity of a Childs Intellect, to underſtand the abſtruſe Affections of *Parabola's*, *Hyperbola's* and the incommenſurable Lines of a Square, hinders not thoſe Figures, from being contained in *rerum naturâ*, or their Affections from being *true* and *demonſtrable*. And tho' we do admit ſome priviledged things in the Sence above declared, yet, (to ſay ſomewhat to obviate *Pyrocles*'s Fear) there is no neceſſity that we ſhould be interdicted all Knowledge of thoſe ſublime Objects, in which there are many things, whereof, or of their Conſequences, we muſt confeſs our ſelves ignorant. Thus elder Geometricians knew very well what a Rectangular Triangle was, when they conceived it to be a Figure conſiſting of three ſtrait Lines, two of which comprize a right Angle; though probably for a great while they did not know ſo much as all its *chief*

Proper-

Properties or Affections: since for ought appears, before *Pythagoras*, (who offered a *Heccatombe* to the Muses in gratitude for the Discovery) it was not known that the Square of the *Hypothenusa* is equal to the Squares of both the other Sides; and much more likely it is, that they were not able to solve those Difficulties (that continue to perplex even *our* Age) which attend that endless divisibility of Lines, that is inferrible from that Equality of the two Squares to the single Square.

And besides the inscrutable Perfections of God, some of his Works are such, that, notwithstanding the compleat Knowledge of them surpasses our Forces; yet there remains so many things, as well worthy to be known, as possible to be attained by us, that they will allow Exercise enough to the Wits of all the Philosophers in the World. And besides that, as I have been saying, even about these priviledged Subjects themselves, divers considerable

ſiderable things may be diſcovered; if they were altogether impenetrable by our Underſtandings, yet their Number is ſo ſmall, that they would leave a large Scope for human Knowledge to diffuſe and improve it ſelf. For 'tis not every thing that is hard to be underſtood or contrary to the common Rules of Probability, that has a right to paſs for a priviledged thing, for ſo the Paradoxes about Srud Quantities, of Iſoperimetal Figures; duplicate and triplicate Proportion, and divers other ſurpriſing Doctrines that are capable of Mathematical Demonſtrations, would be priviledged things. Nor are all thoſe worthy of this Title that are by many propoſed and embraced as Philoſophical Myſteries, for, ſuch are the Peripateticks Subſtantial Forms, which really are not priviledged things, but Scholaſtic Chimeras. But tho' I ſhall not preſume poſitively to ſet down the diſcriminating Bounds and Signes of priviledged things,

yet moſt if not all of them being ſuch, as are either primary in their kind, as God himſelf, and the things whoſe Nature flows immediately from him, or elſe things that if thorowly inſpected, do neceſſarily involve the conſideration of ſome kind of *Infinitum*, *or* elſe are ſuch that tho' in ſome main Queſtions about them one ſide muſt be taken, both ſides are encombred with abſurdities, or ſcarce ſuperable Difficulties: Thoſe I ſay being all (or ſome of them) the uſual marks that belong to priviledged things, you will eaſily grant, that their Number is not near ſo great as their abſtruſeneſs; and that therefore *Pyrocles* and his Philoſophical Friends need not fear to want employment for their Curioſity. And for farther Anſwer to his Objection I ſhall add that we muſt regulate our *Belief* by our *Perceptions*, not our *Wiſhes*, and muſt not conclude, that becauſe 'twere deſirable for us, that all things were penetrable to our humane Underſtandings,

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there is really nothing that is *not* ſo: and we can no more conclude that we are as knowing as Angels, becauſe we wiſh we were ſo, than that we are as immortal as they, becauſe we would never die. But as for thoſe few things that have belonging to them, Properties ſo extraordinary, as to make it probable, even at the firſt ſight, that their Nature muſt be very abſtruſe and difficult be fully diſcover'd by us, I hope *Pyrocles* will allow, that things of ſo Heteroclite a Nature may challenge an exemption from ſome of the rules imployed about common things; And that really ſuch Rules as I mean, and ſome alſo of the vulgar Notions cannot always be ſafely extended to ſuch Subjects, I forbear to ſhew in this place; only becauſe I would not too long at once interrupt *Arnobius*; and I expect to have a good opportunity to ſpeak again of this Subject, before our Conference be ended.

Tim. You may then, I presume, *Arnobius*, as soon as you please, favour us with your second Advice.

Arnob. I shall readily obey you, *Timotheus*, by proposing it thus:

The Second Advice, or Rule.

That we be not hasty to frame Negatives about Privileg'd Things, or to reject Propositions or Explications concerning them; at least, as if they were absurd or impossible.

'Tis easie to observe in the Speculation of natural things themselves, how unsafe 'tis not only to affirm, but in divers Cases also reject opinions, before men have any thing near a competent Historical Information of what belongs to the Subject they take upon them peremptorily to judge of. And therefore it must in reason be thought much more unwary

to

to be forward to reſolve upon Negative Propoſitions about things which we our ſelves acknowledge to be above the reach of Human Reaſon, which ſince they are, 'twill become us at leaſt to forbear a rude and inſulting way of rejecting the opinions of Learned Men that diſſent from us about ſuch things; ſince the ſublimity of the Subject ſhould make miſtakes about them the more eaſie to be pardon'd, becauſe they are difficult to be avoided; and our own ſharing in the diſability of penetrating ſuch abſtruſe things, ſhould keep us from being overconfident, that we alſo may not be miſtaken, and incline us to tolerate other mens opinions about matters wherein we our ſelves have but opinion, not ſcience.

Pyr. But have not you formerly adviſed us not to ſuffer our ſelves to be impos'd upon by proofleſs Aſſertions, even about privileg'd things?

Arnob. I did ſo, and do ſo ſtill:

but there is a great deal of difference between believing a proofleſs affirmation about things which the affirmer does not know to be true, and framing Negative Concluſions againſt Opinions, which, for ought we yet clearly know, *may* be true: and therefore my preſent advice is very conſiſtent with my former: for here I counſel only, either a ſuſpenſion of Judgment, when there appears no proof on either ſide ſufficient to ſway the Intellect; or ſuch a wary and unprejudic'd aſſent to opinions that are but faintly probable, that the mind may be ready to receive, without either obſtinacy, or ſurpriſe, any better argument that ſhall conclude the contrary of the opinion we favour'd before.

Eugen. But methinks 'tis hard to avoid the framing of Conjectures, even about thoſe ſublime Subjects, concerning which we can frame but conjectures, and thoſe often very ſlight ones.

Arnob.

Arnob. I confeſs an abſolute ſuſpenſion of judgment is a very uneaſie thing, nor do I ſtrictly require you ſhould entertain no conjectures; but only that we ſhould conſider that we may be eaſily miſtaken in them, and by further information ſee cauſe to lay them down, and perhaps exchange them for contrary ones: my thoughts of this matter may be perchance ſomewhat illuſtrated by ſuppoſing that we four were walking in a High-way, and diſcover'd as far off as our eyes could reach, ſome erected and moving body of human ſtature; tho we ſhould by its ſhape and walking ſafely enough conclude that 'twere no other animal than a man, yet what manner of man he were, as old, or young, handſome, or ugly; we ſhould not be able to diſcern, and conſequently, could have no ſufficient ground to determine. And as if I ſhould affirm him to be a young man or handſome, you may juſtly

cenſure me of raſhneſs; ſo if becauſe I cannot prove my conjecture, you ſhould reſolutely deny that he is a young man or handſome, I ſhould think you guilty, tho not of an equal, yet of a cenſurable unwarineſs, becauſe, for ought you know to the contrary, he may be what I gueſs'd him to be. And tho we are naturally ſo uneaſie under fluctuation of mind, that for my part I confeſs (and it may be you may be ſubject to the ſame Infirmity) I ſhould ſcarce forbear reſembling in my thoughts the man we ſpeak of to ſome body or other that I knew, yet I ſhould juſtly think that Conjecture to be very fallible, and *both* expect that when I ſhould come to have a nearer and clearer view of him, I might ſee cauſe to diſmiſs my firſt *Idea* for that which this new and better proſpect would afford me, tho it were quite differing from that I had formerly entertain'd, *and* ſhould repreſent him, that my forward

forward thought perhaps reſemble, to a young man of my acquaintance with black curl'd hair, and a ruddy complexion, to be pale and wrinckled, with grey hair curl'd like a pound of Candles. The Application, I ſuppoſe, I may ſpare.

But Gentlemen, I would not be underſtood in the preceding Diſcourſe, as if I were againſt all framing of Negative Propoſitions about privileg'd Things; my deſign being but to diſſuade from haſty ones: For ſometimes 'tis much more eaſie and ſafe to deny things, than to affirm them to belong to a Subject that ſurpaſſes our Reaſon. And the obſervation may be of uſe, eſpecially in two caſes; *one*, when the Negative we aſſert is grounded not upon Axioms taken from the uſual courſe of Nature, or upon Propoſitions dubious, or remote from the firſt Principles of knowledge, but upon either Catholick and Metaphyſical Axioms, or elſe upon

upon Truths manifeſtly flowing from ſome clear, tho inadequate notion we have of the nature of the things we treat of. The *other* Caſe is, when we have a clear and ſufficient proof by Revelation, or otherwiſe, of the poſitive Attributes of the things we contemplate; for then we may ſafely deny of that Subject any other thing that is really inconſiſtent with that poſitive Attribute. Upon which account it is, that tho we do not fully comprehend what God is, yet knowing by the clear Light of Nature (and if we be Chriſtians) believing it upon the account of Revelation, that he is a Being Intelligent and infinitely perfect, we may ſafely deny againſt *Epicurus*, *Vorſtius*, and Mr. *Hobbs*, that he is a Corporeal Subſtance, as alſo that he is Mortal, or Corruptible.

Pyrocl. I ſhall not trouble you, *Arnobius*, to inlarge upon your laſt Advice, but willingly receive the favour of your next.

Arnob.

Arnob. Which ſhall be this:

The Third Advice, or Rule.

That a matter of Fact or other Truth about Privileg'd Things being prov'd by Arguments competent in their kind, we ought not to deny it meerly becauſe we cannot explain, or perhaps ſo much as conceive the Modus of it.

'Tis no very difficult Task to juſtifie this Advice; but I may do it the better, if you give me leave to frame and premiſe a Diſtinction, for want of which I have obſerved a want of Clearneſs in ſeveral Diſcourſes, where the term *Modus* has been employed: for ſometimes we would deny ſo much as a poſſibillity, that one thing can belong to, or be truly ſaid of another; as when we ſay we underſtand not how one Creature can create another; or how there can be a Line that is neither

neither ſtraight, nor crooked; or a finite (whole) number that is neither even nor odd. But moſt commonly we mean by our not underſtanding the *Modus* of a thing, that we do not clearly and diſtinctly conceive after what manner the Property or other Attribute of a Subject belongs to it, or performs its operations. The firſt kind of *Modus* may, for diſtinctions ſake, be called a *poſſible Modus*; and the other, an *actual modus*. Now in both the foregoing Acceptions of the term *Modus*, we may find Inſtances fit for our preſent purpoſe. For we cannot imagine, *How* a ſhort Line or other finite Quantity can be endleſly diviſible, or (on the contrary) how Infinite Parts ſhould make but a Finite Total: and yet Geometry conſtrains us to admit, *That* it is ſo. But tho there be but few Inſtances of this kind, yet of the other ſort of our Neſcience of the *Modus* of things, there may be found more

more Inſtances than we could wiſh there were; for even in natural and corporeal things the eager diſputes of the acuteſt Philoſophers, and the ingenuous Confeſſions of the moſt judicious and moderate, ſufficiently manifeſt, that as yet we know not the manner of operating whereby ſeveral Bodies perform what we well know they bring to paſs. And not to enter into thoſe nice and tedious Diſputes of the cauſe of the Coheſion of the parts of matter in the ſmalleſt, moſt principal, and moſt primary Bodies, perhaps without going out of our ſelves, the way whereby the Rational Soul can exerciſe any power over the humane body, and the way whereby the Underſtanding and the Will act upon one another, have not yet been intelligibly explain'd by any. And the like I may ſay of the *Phænomena* of the *Memory*, eſpecially in thoſe in whom that faculty is eminent. For 'tis a thing much

much more fit to be admired, than eaſie to be conceived, how in ſo narrow a compaſs as part of a Human Brain, there ſhould be ſo many thouſand diſtinct Cells or Impreſſions as are requiſite to harbour the Characters or Signatures of many Languages, each of them conſiſting of many thouſand differing Words, beſides the Images or Models of ſo many thouſand Faces, Schemes, Buildings, and other ſenſible Objects, and the Ideas of ſo many thouſand Notions and Thoughts, and the diſtinct Footſteps of almoſt innumerable multitudes of other things: and how all theſe ſhall in ſo narrow a compaſs have ſuch deep and laſting Impreſſions made for them, and be oftentimes lodged ſo exactly in the order wherein they were at firſt committed to the memory (and that perhaps many years before) that upon a ſudden command of the Will, or a ſlight caſual Hint, a whole ſet of Words, Things and Circumſtances

Circumſtances will in a trice, as it were, ſtart up and preſent themſelves even in the very *Series*, order and manner that ſo long before belong'd to them. And I doubt not, but that beſides thoſe abſtruſe things, about the *Modus*, of which the more candid Philoſophers have confeſſed their Ignorance, there would many others have been taken notice of, if we did but as ſeriouſly and impartially inquire into the Nature of all the things we are pleaſed to think we know. And when I reflect on the yet depending Diſputes between Philoſophers and Mathematicians about the nature of *Place* and *Local Motion*, which are things ſo obvious and familiar to us, I ſhould, tho I had no other Inducements, be inclin'd to think, that we ſhould find difficulties enough in many other Subjects wherein we do not now take notice of any, if we particularly ſtudyed their nature; and that our acquieſcence in what we have

learned about many things proceeds not from our greater knowledge of their nature, but from our having exerciſed leſs curioſity and attention in conſidering it.

And if in things *Corporeal*, that are the familiar objects of our Senſes, we are often reduc'd to confeſs our Ignorance of the Modes of their inexiſting or operating, I hope it will not be denyed, that to a Being wholly unapproachable by our Senſes, natural Theology may be allowed to aſcribe ſome things whoſe *Modus* is not attainable by our underſtanding: As the Divine Preſcience of *future Contingents*; which as 'twere impious, to deny as to the truth of the thing; ſo I fear 'tis impoſſible to explicate as to the *Modus* of it.

Eugen. If it were at this time proper for me to meddle with things of that kind, I ſhould not much ſcruple to ſay in favour of the Chriſtian Religion, that divers Tenents granted both by Chriſtians, Jews, and Heathens,

as

as parts of *natural* Theology, to me ſeem as difficult to be conceived, as divers of thoſe Myſteries that for their unintelligibleſs are fiercely oppoſed in *Reveal'd* Theology. I will not take upon me to judge of others; but for my part I confeſs, I do not much better underſtand, how an Intellect and a Will and Affections are diſtinctly inexiſtent in God, in ſuch ſort as they are wont to be attributed to him, than how in him there can be a Trinity; ſtated, not as ſome Schoolmen explicate, or rather darken it, but as the Goſpel delivers it: I can as little explain by any thing in Nature, how God, who is an immaterial Subſtance, can move Matter, as how he can create it: nor would it at all ſatisfie me to tell me, that a Rational Soul moves a Human Body; for I do not allow, that it gives any motion to the Body, but only guides that which other Agents have put the parts of it into. And tho it did

produce motion in the Body, my ſcruple would yet remain; for the *Carteſians* themſelves confeſs, that the power the Soul has of ſo much as *determining* the motion of the Body belongs to it, not upon any Phyſical Account, but by the particular Appointment and immediate Power of God, who would have that Power one of the Conditions or Properties of the Union of the Soul and Body. So that to me, who deſire to have it explained how an immaterial Subſtance can move Matter, and conſequently, how God can do it, it will be no ſatisfaction to ſay, that the Rational Soul can move the Body 'tis joyned to, ſince that Power is referred merely to God's Appointment: And the queſtion is, how God himſelf can be conceived to move matter.

Arnob. I know not whether upon the ſame Grounds which I do not diſallow, I may not add, that whereas by many 'tis looked upon

upon as an inconceivable thing that God ſhould ſee mens Thoughts, to me it appears as little intelligible how he can know their outward Actions: For ſince we have no way of diſcerning the particular motions of Mens Bodies, but by ſome of our Senſes, eſpecially our ſight; and ſince thoſe Senſations themſelves neceſſarily require Organs duly conſtituted, that is, made up of divers parts, fram'd and joyn'd after ſuch a determinate manner, I ſee not how we can explain the Perception of viſible Objects without an Eye, or ſo much as any Corporeal Organ, or Subſtance; eſpecially ſince 'tis, and that very juſtly, aſſerted, that the Deity is not united to any portion of matter, as the Human Soul is to the Human Body. And to theſe Inſtances, others to the ſame purpoſe might be added, but that I think it fitter to mind you, that of thoſe already mention'd amongſt us, there are ſome that I preſume you will

judg referable to that which I lately called a *poſſible Modus*; ſince it ſeems, *toto genere*, as they ſpeak, inexplicable, how the Attribute inexiſts in the Subject, and after what manner the Cauſe can produce the Effect aſcribed to it.

Tim. I know you too well, Gentlemen, to ſuſpect, you mean, by this, to deny to God either the power of moving matter, or that of perceiving all its motions.

Arnob. You may well take that for granted, and you may remember, that to prevent miſtakes, I was careful in propoſing my Advice to except thoſe things for which there is ſome poſitive proof competent in its kind.

Pyrocl. One may then, without ſurpriſing you, ask what kind of proofs thoſe may be?

Arnob. A full Anſwer to that Queſtion would take up too much of that little time that is allowed us before it grow dark, to go thorow the Advices that yet remain unſpoken of. But yet to comply with

with you as far as my haſte will permit, I ſhall name two or three kinds of poſitive proofs, that may be employed on ſuch occaſions as we ſpeak of. And *firſt*, if there be an effect that we diſcern muſt proceed from ſuch a Cauſe, or Agent, we may conclude that ſuch a Cauſe there is, tho we do not particularly conceive how, or by what operation 'tis able to produce the acknowledg'd effect: Thus, tho a man otherwiſe of a good Judgment, being wholly a ſtranger to the Mathematicks, cannot conceive how a skillful Aſtronomer can many years before hand fore-tell Eclipſes to a day and hour, and perhaps to a few minutes; yet when the ſucceſs does, as it often happens, verifie ſuch Predictions, he will be ſatisfied, that the maker of them had the skill to foreknow the things foretold in them. And ſo the generality of Learned Men among us, who are not ſo much acquainted with that part of Navigation,

which ſome Moderns have by a Greek Name called *Limen-Euretica*, or the Art of ſteering to Harbours, cannot well conceive how a Ship, that is, for inſtance, in the vaſt Atlantick Ocean above a thouſand miles from any ſhoar, ſhould be ſo directed as to arrive juſt at a little Harbor not Cannon-ſhot over, which perhaps neither the Pilot, nor any other in the Ship ever ſaw. And yet as little as we can diſtinctly conceive how ſuch an Art of finding Ports can be framed, we ſcruple not to allow there is ſuch an one, becauſe Navigators to the Eaſt and Weſt *Indies*, could not without the Guidance of ſuch an Art find the remoteſt Ports they are bound for.

A ſecond ſort there is of poſitive proofs conſiſting of thoſe Conſequences that are clearly and legitimately inferr'd from any manifeſt acknowledg'd, or already demonſtrated Truth. To this ſort belong divers Mathematical

Propoſitions

Propoſitions and Corollaries, which tho being nakedly propoſed they ſeem incredible to the generality of Learned Men, and ſometimes to Mathematicians themſelves, are yet fully aſſented to, becauſe they clearly follow from either manifeſted or demonſtrated Truths. Thus many cannot conceive how 'tis poſſible there may be a million, for inſtance, of Circles, (or as many more as you pleaſe) whoſe Circumferences ſhall each of them come nearer and nearer to one another, and to a ſtraight Line aſſign'd, and yet none of them either touch, much leſs cut, either any other Circle, or that Line but in one and the ſame point. And yet this is one of the odd Propoſitions that Geometers have rightly deduc'd as Corollaries from the ſixteenth of *Euclid*'s third Element. And tho we cannot clearly conceive how two Lines, that at their remoteſt ends are but little diſtant from each o-

ther, ſhould perpetually incline towards each other without ever concurring; yet Geometricians, that is, the rigideſt Reaſoners that we know of, have been compell'd admit this in the *Linea Conchoides* of *Nicomedes*, to name no more. But tho, (not to touch the ſame ſtrings too often) I thought fit to mention theſe Inſtances; yet whether you judge them ſufficient or no, you will allow that which may be taken from the endleſs diviſibility of a Line: For tho, if I miſremember not, *Sophronius* told me, he took notice to you how unable we are to have a ſatisfactory apprehenſion, how a ſhort line as well as a long, can be divided into more and more parts without any ſtop,; yet Geometricians generally admit this, becauſe it may be clearly deduc'd from ſome Geometrical Truths, and particularly from the incommenſurableneſs of the Side and Diagonal of a Square. And if you will allow me to have once

more

more recourſe to Divine Preſcience, I may add another acknowledg'd inſtance by repreſenting, that Philoſphers have admitted that, becauſe they judged it clearly to follow from the infinite Perfections of God; tho, how he can foreſee Contingency the moſt judicious and modeſt of them did not pretend their Reaſon was able to conceive.

Timoth. To theſe two kinds of poſitive proofs mention'd by *Arnobius*, I doubt not but he will give me leave to add Divine Revelations, if competently atteſted ones can be produc'd; and therefore I will not by going about to evince this, ſpend any of the time he reſerves for the remaining Rules, to which he may, for me, advance aſſoon as he thinks fit.

Arnob. I accept the Liberty you offer me, *Timotheus*, to proceed to my next Advice; which is this.

That

The Fourth Advice, or Rule.

That when we treat of Privileg'd Subjects, we are not bound always to think every thing false, that ſeems to thwart ſome received Dictate of Reaſon.

As great a Paradox as this may at firſt bluſh appear, yet it will need little more to make it out than the application of ſome things already delivered on occaſion of the two foregoing Advices, of which this is indeed little more than a Corollary. For it being evident, that as a great part of the Dictates of Reaſon are Negative, ſo Negative Propoſitions do uſually ſpring from the repugnancy we judge that ſome things have to ſome poſitive Dictate of Reaſon; if thoſe poſitive Dictates contain but gradual and limited Truths (to borrow *Sophronius* his Terms;) and come to be unduly extended to privileg'd

privileg'd Subjects it may very poſſibly happen, that a thing may be really true, that yet muſt appear falſe, if it be judg'd of by its congruity to one of thoſe limited, and but reſpective Dictates of Reaſon. 'Tis alſo clear, that not only in Philoſophy, but natural (as well as reveal'd) Theology the uſual ground on which we reject many things is, that we judge them unintelligible. And I cenſure not the practice in general, but I think it may eaſily miſlead us, when it is extended to things that we may diſcern to tranſcend our Reaſon, as for ought yet appears, ſome of the *Modus*'s even of things Corporeal are found to do. And we think we have made complete Enumerations of the ſeveral ways of inexiſtence of an Attribute in a Subject, or of the operation of one thing upon another, when indeed we have overlook'd one or other, and perhaps that which we have thus pretermitted may be the true one;

one; tho it may be alſo that no attention and diligence of ours could in ſome Caſes have ſerved our turn, the *Modus* inquired after being not conceivable to us, tho it may be too a higher than a human Intellect.

Pyrocles. The School-Philoſophers for many Ages in the Catalogues they made of the ways of a Bodies working upon another at a diſtance; did not think of the true ways by which *Odors* and *Sounds* are communicated to us, and therefore had recourſe to certain unintelligible things, which they were pleas'd to call *Species Intentionales.* Whereas thoſe modern Naturaliſts that philoſophize freely, acknowledge, that Odors are communicated by *Effluviums*, exhaling from the odorous Body, and fitted to affect our Noſtrils, and Sounds are tranſmitted to the Ear by the undulating motion which the Air is put into by the impulſe of the vibrating, or otherwiſe agitated parts of the ſonorous Body. *Tim.*

Timoth. Methinks we need not go out of our ſelves to find Inſtances of both the parts of what *Arnobius* was laſt ſaying, if we admit, as I queſtion not but we rationally may, this Tenet of the generality of Philoſophers, both ancient and modern, That the Reaſonable Soul is an immaterial Subſtance: For then; whereas men think they have ſufficiently enumerated the ways of determining the motion of a Body, by ſaying, that the determination muſt be made either in the Line wherein the Impellent that put it into motion made it move, or in the Line wherein it was determined to move by the ſituation of the reſiſting Body that it met with in its way; the motions of the animal Spirits, if not alſo ſome other internal parts of the Body, may, the Body being duly diſpoſed, be determined by the human Will; which is a way quite differing from the other. And how this Attribute, I mean the

the power of determining the motion of a Body, without any power to impart motion to that Body, ſhould belong to an immaterial Creature, which has no Corporeal Parts to reſiſt the free paſſage of a Body, and thereby change the Line of its Motion, is not yet, nor perhaps ever will be in this life, clearly conceived by us men, tho there is no doubt, but that he, who indowed the Soul with this Attribute or Power, perfectly underſtands, both how it exiſts in the Soul, and how the Soul by exerting it, operates on the Body.

Pyrocles. But can any thing ſeem more unreaſonable than to embrace opinions that contradict the Rules of Reaſon; which practice, if it be once allowed, why ſhould we trouble our ſelves to inveſtigate what is congruous or incongruous to Reaſon, ſince the making a diſcovery, that an opinion is repugnant to it, will not aſſure us of that opinions being falſe. *Arnob.*

Arnob. A perſon leſs knowing and equitable than *Pyrocles* would have ſpared this double Objection, if he had remembred, what hath been formerly ſaid, applicable to our preſent purpoſe, and what kind of things they are that we are diſcourſing of: But to remind him a little of them, I ſhall deſire him to conſider with me, that I no way diſallow the rejecting of Opinions that are found contrary to thoſe Rules of Reaſon, at the framing of which the things opin'd about were duly taken into conſideration: But in Caſes not thought on when ſuch Rules were deviſed, we are not always bound to ſubmit to be judged by them; and to maintain an opinion unconformable to ſuch a Rule, may be not to *oppoſe* a genuine and abſolute dictate of Reaſon, but to *rectifie* one that is *erroneouſly* thought ſo, by ſhewing, that the Rule is expreſſed in more Catholick and Indefinite Terms than it ought to have been.

And

And of two opinions you will not deny that that is the moſt rational that is moſt agreeable to thoſe Rules of Reaſon, that are framed upon the fulleſt Information.

Eugen. 'Tis not difficult to gather from what you have ſaid, *Arnobius*, that in the Rule you propoſed to us; very few of the Caſes that occur in ordinary diſcourſe, or even in that of Philoſophers, will be at all concern'd. And in theſe few Caſes wherein you intend the Rule ſhould take place, you are careful to obviate inconveniences by a double caution. The *firſt* that you ſuppoſe, that the opinion that claims an exemption from the common Rules, is not an arbitrary or precarious *Tenet*, but ſufficiſufficiently made out by proper Arguments. And the *ſecond*, by declaring, that 'tis not to contradict right Reaſon, but bad Reaſoners to give limitation to Rules that have been too haſtily fram'd and conceiv'd in too general

neral Terms, by men, who either were not competently inform'd of the variety of Particulars, when they took upon them to make *Analyſes* and Enumerations; or elſe preſum'd to infer, that a thing was not, becauſe they did not underſtand the *Modus* of its exiſtence or operation.

Arnobius. You take my ſenſe right, *Eugenius*, and I have often thought, that the cauſes of the great clamor that is made againſt ſome men for not obſequiouſly ſubmitting to, what ſome others call the Rules of Reaſon, are, that men do not ſufficiently underſtand the *nature* of *things* and *themſelves*, but entertain too narrow conceptions of the former, and too high an opinion of the later.

Pyrocles. The Dictates of Reaſon being the ſureſt, if not the only ſafe Rules, that Nature has given us to frame our Diſcourſes and Ratiocinations by; I confeſs I am, tho not fully reſolv'd, yet

very unwilling, to allow any Concluſion that is not conformable to them: or to admit that any thing ſhould be ſo highly *privileg'd*, as to be exempted from the Juriſdiction of Reaſon, whoſe genuine Declarations they are.

Eugenius. This Objection, *Pyrocles*, ſeems to me to be grounded rather upon an ambiguity of Terms, than the true nature of Things. For Reaſon is oftentimes taken for a Set of Notions and Propoſitions employ'd and acquieſc'd in by this or that ſort of Reaſoners, that are wont to have names given them from this or that particular Diſcipline, as Aſtronomy, Chymiſtry, Opticks, *&c.* of whoſe receiv'd Doctrines they are ſuppoſed to be entirely maintainers. But it is alſo with at leaſt as much propriety, uſed to ſignifie the rational faculty it ſelf; furniſhed with the light that accompanies it when it is rightly diſpoſed and informed. In the firſt of theſe two Senſes it ſeems

but

but reaſonable to allow, that ſome things ought to have the privilege to be exempted from being judg'd by *ſome* of the ſame Rules that are employ'd to judge of other things by; for ſome of theſe Rules were fram'd upon a ſlight conſideration of common and familiar things, either by the vulgar, or by men that for want of skill or application of mind did not critically conſider the diſtinct natures of things, and yet preſum'd to ſettle Rules that other mens inadvertence or lazineſs has made them receive for certain Dictates of Reaſon: whereas other natures ſhould have been then conſidered as well as thoſe: and by reaſon of their not having been ſo, the Rules I ſpeak of are not always proper and ſafe, when they are applyed to theſe overlooked natures. Thus *Succeſſive Beings*, as Time and Local Motion, do in ſome Caſes require to be eſtimated by other meaſures than *Subſtances*, whether materi-

al, or incorporeal.. And ſo alſo the more nice Metaphyſicians, eſpecially among the Moderns, have thought themſelves obliged to diſcourſe of *Moduſes*, Relations, Privations, Extrinſecal Denominations, *&c.* in a very differing way from that which belongs to Bodies and Spirits; tho the unskilful (even among otherwiſe learned men) have been wont, and ſtill are apt, to confound all theſe Subjects; by applying to them indiſcriminately the ſame Rules, or, as they think them, Dictates of Reaſon.

But beſides what may be ſaid of theſe long unregarded or undiſtinguiſhed natures, there are other entities that are more generally and familiarly taken notice of, wherein I may think one may find inſtances more applyable to my preſent purpoſe. For I obſerve, that tho all other actual Beings are compounded (to ſpeak in the language of the Schools) of Eſſence and Exiſtence; yet according

cording to the notion of Metaphyſicians as well as Divines, it muſt be acknowledg'd, that the ſimplicity of the Divine Nature is ſuch as to exclude from God even this kind of compoſition. And indeed the notion we have of a Being infinitely perfect, imports, that, tho in no other Being, yet in this, thoſe two are inſeparable; for actual exiſtence being a perfection, muſt needs belong to the Nature of a Being infinitely perfect. The generality of Philoſophers, after *Ariſtotle*, conceive *Place* to be the immoveable and immediately contiguous concave Surface of the ambient Body, ſo that 'tis a kind of Veſſel that every way contains the Body lodg'd in it; but with this difference that a Veſſel is a kind of moveable place, as when a Bottle of Wine is carried from the Cellar to the Table; but place is an immoveable Veſſel, or a Veſſel conſidered as immoveable: now ſuppoſing with *Ariſtotle*, and the

generality of Philoſophers, the plenitude of the world, it may be truly ſaid, that all Plants, Animals, Minerals, Stars and other Bodies are each of them in ſuch an Ariſtotelian place as has been deſcrib'd; whence it has been uſually ſaid by Philoſophers, that what is in no place (I hope they meant it only of Bodies) is not at all; yet it appears not how the outermoſt Heaven, whether that be the Firmament, or no, I need not here inquire, can be properly ſaid to be in a place, ſince theſe Philoſophers aſſerting the World to be finite, muſt grant there is no ambient body without it to contain it. And I ſhall add on this occaſion, that if the outermoſt Heaven ſhould be impell'd by the irreſiſtible power of God in a ſtraight line this way, or that way, there ſhould enſue a motion without change of place, for the outermoſt Heaven was in none before, and does not by its progreſſion come to be contain'd by a

new

new ambient Body. And in this caſe even according to thoſe modern Favourers of *Ariſtotle* that approve *Des' Cartes* his definition of local motion (which indeed is far more intelligible than *Ariſtotle*'s) the world may be ſaid to move without changing of place; for it does not paſs from the Neighbourhood of ſome Bodies to that of others; ſince compriſing all Bodies, and yet being bounded, there is no body for it to leave behind, nor any beyond it for it to approach to; and tho the Carteſians in their Hypotheſis of the indefiniteſs of the World do partly avoid the force of what I have been ſaying; yet beſides what may be rationally urg'd to ſhew, that if the world be not more than indefinite, it muſt be really finite; I conſider that the Carteſians, tho upon grounds of their own, muſt allow what I was obſerving, namely, that tho every particular body in the Univerſe is naturally capable of Lo-

cal Motion. Yet the Univerſe it ſelf is not; and tho every particular body in the world have ſome determinate Figure; yet the world it ſelf, being indefinite, has not ſo.

Whereas *Ariſtotle* and the Philoſophers that have lived ſince his time, have generally admitted the diviſion eſtabliſh'd by him, of all Entities, into Subſtance, and Accident, and accommodated their Rules to one of them, or both: The Learned *Gaſſendus* and his Followers, have introduc'd a third ſort of things, as not being either Subſtances, or Accidents: and theſe if you will admit, you will I preſume, admit too, that they may be privileg'd from their Rules calculated for other Natures. Of this kind of things, the *Gaſſendiſts* make Place or Space to be. For they will not allow it to be a Subſtance, becauſe it is neither body, nor ſpirit, but only ſomewhat that has a capacity to receive or contain bodies, and would

would ſubſiſt, tho God ſhould annihilate all the Subſtances he has created. And for the ſame reaſon it is not to be called an Accident, ſince that neceſſarily requires a Subſtance to reſide in (according to that received *Axiom*) *Accidentis eſſe, eſt ineſſe*, whereas in caſe of the annihilation of the world it ſelf, and conſequently all Subſtances that compoſe it, their place or ſpace would ſtill remain, and be capable of admitting a new world of the ſame extent, if God ſhould be pleaſed to create it; whence *Gaſſendus* wittily infers, that Bodies are rather accidental in reſpect of place, than ſpace in reſpect of Bodies. But without ſtaying to examine this Paradox, I ſhall venture to ſay in general, that he who ſhall with an heedful, and unprejudiced eye, ſurvey the ſeveral *Hypotheſes*, or Syſtems, maintain'd by the differing Sects of Philoſophers, may find, that tho the Inſtances will not

not be all of them the ſame; yet there is none of theſe Syſtems in which one may not obſerve ſome thing or other, to which every one of the Rules that reach to the other Snbjects treated of in that Philoſophy, cannot ſafely be apply'd. And indeed the mind of man being naturally far more deſirous to know much, than to take the pains requiſite to examine, whether he does ſo or not, is very prone to think that any ſmall number of things that it has not diſtinctly conſidered, muſt be of the ſame nature and condition with the reſt that he judges to be of the ſame kind. For by thus attaining to the knowledge of things, by way of Inference, the mind gratifies at once both its vanity, and its lazineſs; looking upon theſe Concluſions, as marks of the excellency of its rational faculty, whilſt they rather proceed from a want of the due exerciſe of it.

Pyrocles. But if the receiv'd Dictates

Dictates of Reaſon be not always ſafe grounds to proceed upon in our Diſcourſe, I would gladly know by what Rules we ſhall judge of thoſe Rules, and diſcover them to be erroneous, in caſe they be ſo, and by what meaſures we ſhall eſtimate truth and falſehood, in thoſe things wherein the uſe of thoſe Rules muſt be laid aſide.

Arnobius. Your double objection, *Pyrocles*, I confeſs to be weighty enough to deſerve a conſiderate anſwer, and to give you the ſum of mine in few words, I ſhall tell you, that in my opinion, ſince there is no progreſs *in infinitum* in the *Criteria* of truth, and that our faculties are the beſt inſtruments that God has given us to diſcover, and to examine it by, I think a clear light or evidence of perception ſhining in the underſtanding, affords us the greateſt aſſurance we can have, (I mean in a *natural* way) of the truth of the judgments we paſs upon things

things, whether they be other things, or the vulgar rules of reaſoning, or ſubjects that claim a privilege from thoſe rules.

And here give me leave to conſider, that it is not by *induction*, but by *evidence*, that we know, that *ex vero nil niſi verum ſequitur*. By which it appears, that the *innate light* of the rational faculty is more primary, than the very *Rules of Reaſoning*, ſince by that light we judge even of the lately mention'd Axiom which is it ſelf the grand principle of Ratiocinations made by Inference.

Eugenius. This matter may be perchance ſomewhat illuſtrated by obſerving that, as the underſtanding is wont to be look'd upon as the eye of the mind; ſo there is this Analogy between them, that there are ſome things that the eye may diſcern (and does judge of) organically, if I may ſo ſpeak, that is, by the help of inſtruments: as when it judges of a Line to be ſtreight by the application

applicasion of a Ruler to it, or to be perpendicular by the help of a Plumb-line, or a Circle to be perfect by the help of a pair of Compasses: But there are other things which the eye does perceive (and judge of) immediately and by intuition, and without the help of Organs or Instruments; as when by the bare evidence of the perception it knows that this colour is red, and that other blue, and that Snow is white, not black, and a Char-coal black, not white; and such a Picture is very like, or another unlike to the face it was drawn to represent. For thus there are some things that the Intellect usually judges of in a kind of Organical way, that is, by the help of certain Rules, or Hypotheses, such as are a great part of the Theorems and Conclusions in Philosophy and Divinity. But there are others which it knows without the help of these Rules more immediately, and as it were intuitively

tuitively by evidence or perception; by which way we know many prime notions and *Effata*, or Axioms Metaphyſical, *&c.* as that *Contradictory Propoſitions cannot both be true*; that *from truth nothing but truth can legitimately be deduc'd*; that *two things that are each of them equal to a third thing, are equal to one another*; that *a whole number is either even or odd.* And 'tis alſo upon this evidence of perception; that we receive with an undoubted aſſent many primitive Ideas and notions, ſuch as thoſe of extended Subſtance or Body, Diviſibility, or Local Motion, a ſtreight Line, a Circle, a right Angle, and many other things that it would be here ſuperfluous to mention.

Arnobius. I think the internal Light that the Author of Nature has ſet up in mans Intellect qualifies him, if he makes a right uſe of it, not only to *apply* the Inſtruments of Knowledge, but alſo to *frame*, and to *examine* them.

them. For by the help of this Light, the Understanding is enabled to look about, and both to consider apart, and compare together, the natures of all kinds of things; without being necessitated to employ in its Speculations, the Rules or Dictates of any particular Science or Discipline; being sufficiently assisted by its own Light, and those general Axioms and Notions that are of a Catholick Nature, and perpetual truth; and so of a higher order, than the Dictates, or Rules of any particular or subordinate Science or Art. And by these means the Understanding may perceive the imperfection and falsity of such Rules or Theorems, as those men that look no higher, nor no further than their own particular Science or Art, embrace for certain and unquestionable. Thus when Philosophers observ'd that they could frame a clear notion of a thing without considering whether it

were

were actually in being or not; or even when they ſuppoſe that 'tis not actually in being; as we can frame a clear conception of a *Roſe* in Winter, when there are none to be found growing; and have a clear notion of a *Myriagon*, tho 'tis very like there is no ſuch Figure really exiſtent in the world. They have generally concluded, that the eſſence of things is differing and ſeparable from their exiſtence. And yet when we conſider that God is a Being infinitely perfect, and that actual exiſtence being a perfection, muſt belong to *Him*; we may by the ſame light of Reaſon that dictated Eſſence & Exiſtence to be two ſeparable things in all other Beings, diſcern that they muſt be inſeparable in God; and conſequently that the forementioned Rule, tho more *general* than almoſt any other, is not abſolutely *univerſal*: but muſt be limited by the light of Reaſon. And thus alſo Philoſophers, conſidering that not only

only all ſorts of Bodies, but the immaterial Souls of Men, (and Angels themſelves, ſuppoſing ſuch Beings) are all endowed with Qualities which are Accidents, have included it in the very notion of a ſubſtance, to be the ſubject of Accidents, or as the Schoolmen ſpeak, *ſubſtare Accidentibus*; and accordingly *ſubſtantia* is wont to be derived *à ſubſtando*: But the infranchiſed Intellect, finding in it ſelf a notion of an abſolutely perfect, and therefore exiſtent Being; and conſidering that to be the ſubject of Accidents, is not a thing agreeable to the higheſt perfection poſſible; it concludes, thatin God there are no Accidents. And this Concluſion has been embraced as a part, not only of Chriſtian, but of Natural Theology; and maintain'd by divers Philoſophers themſelves, upon Metaphyſical and other meerly rational grounds. In ſhort, the native light of the mind may enable

a man, that will make a free and induſtrious uſe of it, both to paſs a right judgment of the extent of thoſe very Dictates that are commonly taken for Rules of Reaſon, and to frame others on purpoſe for privileg'd things, ſo far forth as they are ſo. But I fear, Gentlemen, the fourth Advice I have ventured to offer you, has by its tediouſneſs, made you juſtly impatient of being detain'd by it ſo long: and therefore I ſhall advance to the Fifth; which imports,

The Fifth Advice, or Rule.

That where Privileg'd Things are concern'd, we are not always bound to reject every thing, as falſe, that we know not how to reconcile with ſome thing that is true.

Pyrocl. You may call this an Advice, but I doubt others will ſtyle it a Paradox, and poſſibly, think

think it one of the greateſt that ever was broach'd.

Arnob. Yet perhaps you will find by and by, that it may be in great part made good by what has been already diſcourſed, and by you admitted. I think it will not be doubted, but that there are, or may be conceived ſtreight Lines, whereof one is a hundred or a thouſand times longer than another: 'Tis alſo generally granted, that a longer Line conſiſts of, or may afford more parts than a ſhorter; for a Line equal to the ſhorter, being taken out of the longer, and conſequently juſt as diviſible as it, there will remain of the longer Line another Line, perhaps many times exceeding the ſhorter Line: And laſtly, 'tis generally acknowledged, that no Number can be greater than infinite; ſince if the leſſer number were capable of acceſſion (as it muſt be, if it fall ſhort of another number) it would need that acceſſion (or a

greater) to make it infinite, which yet 'tis ſuppoſed to be already.

Pyrocl. I ſee not yet to what all this may tend.

Arnob. You will quickly perceive it, when I ſhall have deſired you to reconcile theſe Propoſitions with the demonſtrations of Geometers of the endleſs Diviſibility of all ſtreight Lines; whence they deduce, that tho they be very unequal among themſelves, yet the ſhorteſt of them contains, or may afford infinite parts.

Pyrocl. But is there any thing more clear to humane underſtanding, or more ſuppoſed in almoſt all our Ratiocinations, than that two Truths cannot be contradictory to each other.

Arnob. Tho I am far from affirming, that one Truth can really contradict another truth; yet I think that which is but a gradual or limited truth, may in ſome few caſes not be reconcile-

able

able by *Us*, to an abſolute and univerſal Truth. For, I think we may (with *Sophronius*) diſtinguiſh thoſe Propoſitions we call true, into Axioms Metaphyſical, or Univerſal, that hold in all Caſes without reſervation; and Axioms collected or emergent; by which I mean ſuch as reſult from comparing together many particulars that agree in ſomething that is common to them all. And ſome of theſe, tho they be ſo general, that in the uſual Subjects of our Ratiocinations they admit of no exceptions; yet may not be abſolutely and unlimitedly true; of which I know not whether I formerly gave you an inſtance, even in that Axiom which (almoſt) all meerly Natural Philoſophers have ſuppoſed and built on, that, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, which, tho at leaſt one of the higheſt of gradual or collected Truths, may yet be not univerſally true, ſince, for ought we know, God that is acknowledged

to be a Being that is infinitely perfect, may have, and may have exercised, the power of Creating. And in such Cases as this, not to be able to reconcile a truth concerning a privileged thing with a Proposition that generally passes for true (and in other Cases is so indeed) will not presently oblige us to reject either Proposition as false, but sometimes, without destroying either, only to give one of them a due limitation, and restrain it to those sorts of things, on which 'twas at first grounded, and to which 'twas, because of mans ignorance, or inconsiderateness, that 'twas not at first confin'd. And if the Miracles vouch'd either for the Christian, or for any other Religion, be any of them granted to be true; (as almost all mankind agrees in believing in general, that there have been true Miracles;) it cannot well be deny'd but that Physical Propositions are but limited, and such as I called Collected

lected Truths, being gathered from the ſettled *Phænomena* of Nature, and are lyable to this limitation or exception, that *They are true, where the irreſiſtible power of God, or ſome other ſupernatural Agent is not interpos'd to alter the courſe of Nature.*

Pyrocl. But do you think, there are no inconſiſtent Propoſitions that you would call Truths, wherein you cannot ſhew that one of them is but a gradual or emergent Truth?

Arnob. 'Tis one thing to inquire whether *men* have yet diſcerned, or I am able to make out, that one of the Propoſitions you ſpeak of is but a limited truth; and another, to inquire, whether ſpeaking abſolutely and univerſally, it may to any Intellect appear to be no more than ſuch. For firſt I conſider, that the Reaſon why we judge things to be repugnant, Being, that the Notions or Ideas we have of them ſeem to us inconſiſtent, if either

of theſe notions be wrong framed, or be judged of by an unfit Rule, we may think thoſe Propoſitions, to be contradictory that really are not ſo; as, if you heedfully mark it, you ſhall find, that thoſe that are wont to employ their imaginations about things that are the proper Objects of the Intellect, are apt to pronounce things to be unconceivable, only becauſe they find them unimaginable; as if the Fancy and the Intellect were Faculties of the ſame extent: Upon which account ſome have ſo groſly err'd, as to deny all immaterial Subſtances, and choſe rather ſo far to degrade the Deity it ſelf, as to impute to it a Corporeal Nature, than to allow any thing to have a Being that is not comprehenſible by their Imagination, which themſelves acknowledge to be but a Corporeal Faculty. But beſides this miſtake of things repugnant, which ariſes from the miſ application or miſ-management

ment of our diſcerning Faculties, I conſider in the next place, that there may be another that proceeds from the Imperfection and Limitedneſs of our Underſtanding, which being unable to judge of privileged things at the ſame rate that it does of other Objects, may ſometimes be unable to diſcover that reconcileableneſs that a more illuminated and penetrating Faculty may diſcern. This may be illuſtrated by what uſually happens at Sea, (for there mens Proſpect is the moſt free) when looking towards the Main, the Sky and the Waters ſeem to meet at the edge of the (ſenſible) Horizon, tho indeed they are as far diſtant as Heaven is from Earth; and on the other ſide if you skillfully mix together the dry and fine powder ef Orpiment, and that of Indico, you will produce a green colour, as is known to Painters, and the eye takes notice but of an uniform mixture, in which it ſees neither

neither blew nor yellow: But if, (as experience ſhews) you look on this mixture with a very good Microſcope, the emergent colour will diſappear; and you will plainly ſee inſtead of it, blew and yellow grains of the powders diſtinct from one another. Which Inſtances may ſerve to ſhew the imbecillity of our viſive Faculty; and the later of them may teach us, that a thing may appear one and differing, as 'tis looked upon by a more or leſs diſcerning ſight. But an inſtance more home to our preſent purpoſe may be afforded by yellow Diamonds, which becauſe of their Colour, not only other Men, but the generality of Goldſmiths (in whoſe error I have ſometimes ſhared) take to be counterfeit Gems, or at beſt but right Topazes, whereas very skillful Lapidaries, will by ſure ſigns diſcover and acknowledge them to be true Diamonds, notwithſtanding their ſeeming difference

ference from unqueſtion'd ones, and account them to be of the ſame nature with that nobleſt kind of Jewels. Whence we may learn that a more skillful Judge may diſcern an agreement in things that almoſt all other men think they ſee manifeſtly to be of diſtant natures.

Eugenius. Give me leave, Gentlemen, to ſay on this occaſion, that I have ſeveral times obſerved, that men judge ſome things to be irreconcileable, not only when they are both of them repreſented to the underſtanding in the form of Propoſitions; but when one of them is but a notion, or a current definition. For divers of theſe notions do contain in them a Propoſition, or are equivalent to it; As when a Circle is defin'd to be a Figure contain'd in a Line, all whoſe parts are equally diſtant from the middlemoſt Point or Center, this definition contains an affirmation of the eſſential property of a Circle; and

and by the generality of Geometricians is therefore diſcriminated from that Conick Section which they call an Ellipſis, tho that be alſo a Figure terminated by one curve Line.

And becauſe you are verſed in Mathematicks, I ſhall on this occaſion ſhew you by a Geometrical Inſtance, that if a man have not genuine and adequate notions of the things he judges of, he may confidently, and even upon very probable grounds, judge things to be inconſiſtent, that in reality, are not ſo. For if an ordinary Cultivater of Mathematical Diſciplines ſhould hear one man ſay, that ſuch a Figure is an Ellipſis, and another affirm it to be a Circle, he would think their aſſertions to be inconſiſtent, having his mind prepoſſeſſed with an Ellipſis's, being a Conical Section, whoſe properties muſt therefore (he ſuppoſes) be very differing from thoſe of a Circle; whereas ſuch wary Geometri-

cians

cians as the Learned Doctor *Wallis* * will tell him, that the vulgar notions of Conick Sections are not adequate to the Figures producible by them: For when a right Cone is cut quite through by an inclining Plane, the figure produced by the Section agrees well with the received notion of an Ellipsis, in which the Diameters are of unequal length; yet if the Plane cut the Cone parallel to the Basis, that Conick Section will be a true Circle, having all its Diameters equal.

* See his Treatise *de Sectionibus Conicis.*

'Tis indeed an uncommon and unheeded account, but such an one upon which I have observed not only Logicians, but Philosophers themselves to err about judging things reconcileable or inconsistent; that if a man be not sufficiently acquainted with the nature of any of the two things under consideration (and much more if he be ignorant of, or mistaken about both) he may think

think there is a contradiction between things, wherein a Superior or more piercing Intellect may diſcern a conſiſtency; for taking it for granted, that he knows one thing to be a truth, if ſome other thing be affirm'd to be ſo, which he has not underſtanding or skill enough to ſee how to reconcile to it, 'tis no wonder, that how well ſoever this may be evinced, he ſhould as little know how to admit, as how to reject it. This may be partly illuſtrated, and partly prov'd by inſtances drawn from the Mathematicks themſelves: For a Novice in Arithmetick, for example, finding That, according to his Rules, there is not one mean proportional number between 4 and 32, will ſcarce be able to reconcile that Propoſition to this other, That there are two mean proportionals between the mentioned numbers; For he may with great appearance of Reaſon ask, how, if there be not ſo much as one

mean

mean proportional, there can be two? Whereas thoſe that are acquainted with the nature of Ranks or Series of numbers proceeding in Geometrical Proportion, will eaſily diſcern that between thoſe two recited, both the number 8, and the number 16; are mean proportionals.

Timotheus. Tho I diſallow not your Inſtance, *Eugenius*, yet I ſhall be willing to hear one or two others of a leſs abſtracted Nature.

Eug. To obey you, *Timotheus*, I ſhall add, that if an old School-Philoſopher, or a Mathematician not acquainted with the later Diſcoveries made by Teleſcopes, ſhould hear one man ſay, that the Moon is the moſt enlightned, when ſhe appears full to us, and another affirm that ſhe is more inlightned at the New Moon than at the Full, he would readily conclude, upon the ſuppoſition (which he makes no doubt of) that the Moon receives all her light

light immediately from the Sun, that the affirmation of the later (Aſtronomer) cannot be true; which yet he would not conclude, if he knew (what is diſcovered by Teleſcopes) that the Moon is as well inlightned by the Earth, as the Earth by the Moon; upon which ſcore, whereas at *the Full* ſhe receives but thoſe Beams that come to her directly, from the Sun, at *the Change* ſhe receives both *them* in that part of her Body that is obverted to him, and thoſe *other* Beams of his that are reflected from the Terreſtrial Globe to that part of the Moon that is neareſt to us.

And to the foregoing Inſtance, I ſhall add one more, that ſeems appoſite enough to *Arnobius*'s Purpoſe, and 'tis, that before *Pythagoras*, not only the vulgar of the Greeks, but their Philoſophers and Mathematicians too, obſerving oftentimes that a bright Star preceded the Riſing Sun, and that frequently alſo (on other days)

days) after Sun-ſet, another Star appear'd, that was none of the fix'd ones ; they confidently concluded from the ſo diſtant times of Apparition, that the Sun was attended by two differing Stars, to which accordingly they gave two differing names: But *Pythagoras*, who was a far better Aſtronomer (as may be gueſſed, among other things, by his maintaining in thoſe early times the motion of the earth about the Sun) undertook to diſabuſe them, and effected it. Now if one that had obſerved *Venus* only in the mornings, ſhould have affirm'd, that beſides the ſix known Planets, there was but a ſeventh (namely the *Phoſphorus*) which preceded the Riſing Sun; and another, (that had taken notice notice of her only in the Evenings) ſhould aſſert, that beſides the ſame ſix known ones, the only ſeventh was that called *Heſperus*, which ſometimes appear'd after his Setting ; a By-ſtander would pre-

ſently have concluded, that their Aſſertions were not reconcileable, either to one another, or to the truth; which (in his judgment) was, that there muſt be no leſs than eight viſible Planets; and yet *Pythagoras*, who had more skill, and more piercing wit, did, (as was lately noted) diſcern and teach, that theſe two *Phænomena* were produc'd by one and the ſame Planet *Venus*, determined by its peculiar motion (about the Sun) to ſhew it ſelf near our Horizon, ſometimes before he aſcends it, and ſometimes after he had left it. Such inſtances as theſe, tho offered but as illuſtrations, may perſwade us from being too forward to reject every propoſition, that we ſee not how to reconcile to what we take for a truth; provided the diſtruſted propoſition be ſuch as we would acquieſce in, if we could reconcile it to that ſuppoſed Truth.

Timotheus. From this Diſcourſe, *Eugenius*, and that of *Arnobius*,

Arnobius, which preceded it, I think one may gather, that according to you two, when two Propoſitions are laid down, whereof one is made evident to us by Experience, or by Reaſon, acting within its own Juriſdiction or Compaſs; and the other is ſufficiently proved by being mathematically demonſtrated, or duly atteſted by Divine Revelation, we ought not to reject either of theſe propoſitions, as no truth, meerly becauſe we do not yet know how to reconcile them: but we ſhould rather think, that the collected Propoſition, is but a gradual, or limited truth; or elſe we ſhould conſider, that we knowing but ſo imperfectly as we do the particular natures of privileg'd Subjects, for ought we know a ſuperior Intellect may be able to diſcern a friendly agreement between what is deliver'd about that Subject, and the affirmation that ſeems repugnant to it, tho we are not quick-ſighted

enough to perceive this Agreement. And this, how ſtrange ſoever you may think it, *Pyrocles*, may not only be countenanc'd by ſuch things as *Eug.* lately ſaid, but both you your ſelf, and almoſt all mankind do *de facto* ſeem to practiſe it, in the caſe of the Divine Preſcience of mans free Actions.

Eugenius. What you contend for, Gentlemen, may perhaps be thought the more receivable, if one ſhould argue thus: Firſt either the Propoſitions ſaid to be repugnant, are both really true, or they are not; If it be anſwered, that they are not, the difficulty is at an end: for there is none at all to conceive a true Propoſition, ſhould contradict a falſe one. But, ſecondly, if both the Propoſitions be ſuppoſed to be true, it muſt be affirm'd, either that they are reconcileable, or that they are not; if it be ſaid, they are not, then *Pyrocles* his objection is out of doors; for it cannot then be reaſonable to ſay, that

that the two Propoſitions, tho inconſiſtent with one another, muſt neceſſarily be one or other of them inconſiſtent with the truth. But this I preſume he will by no means aſſert, and conſequently, muſt ſay, that the Propoſitions are reconcileable. Upon which anſwer I ſhall demand, how that can be, unleſs a ſuperior Intellect, ſuch as unqueſtionably the Divine is, can diſcover an agreement between Propoſitions wherein we cannot diſcern it. For our not being able to diſcern it, is you know profeſſedly ſuppoſed in the caſe we diſcourſe of.

Pyrocles. But, *Arnobius*, will not this Doctrine make us very liable to have falſities impoſed on us at the pleaſure of bold and dictating men?

Arnob. Not, if it be limited to the ſubjects wherein alone I would have it admitted: for if neither of the things treated of be a privileg'd one, but both in the juriſdiction of ordinary rea-

ſon, I do not only *conſent*, but (in my firſt Advice) *require*, that the Propoſitions fram'd about them be eſtimated according to the common Dictates of Reaſon. And even in caſes where one of the Propoſitions is about a privileg'd thing, I do not at all think fit, that it ſhould be received in ſpite of its being repugnant to the gradual truth delivered in the other, unleſs it can by ſome other Argument ſufficient in its kind be proved to be true; and in that caſe, that, what I plead for, ought to be admitted, is implyed by the ſuffrage of almoſt all mankind, in that caſe, which was juſt now pertinently mentioned by *Timotheus*: for tho men know not how to reconcile the Liberty of mans will, with the infallible knowledge that God has of thoſe Actions that flow from it, yet they have unanimouſly judged it reaſonable to believe both Free-will and Preſcience; the former, becauſe they felt it in themſelves; and

the

the later, partly becauſe the fore-knowledge of things being manifeſtly a perfection, ought not to be denyed to God, whom they looked upon as a Being ſupremely perfect; and partly becauſe ſome actions and events that they all judg'd to flow from mens free-will, were, as the generality of men believ'd, foretold by Prophetick Oracles. But except in ſuch caſes as I have been naming, I am altogether of *Pyrocles*'s mind, that ſince we have ſcarce any way of diſcovering a Falſity, but by its being repugnant to ſomewhat that is true; to deny, that in caſes within the juriſdiction of ordinary Reaſon, the repugnancy of a Propoſition to any manifeſt truth, ought to ſway our Judgments, were to deprive us of the uſefulleſt *Criterion* to diſcriminate between Falſhood and Truth.

Timoth. For my part, who believe with many Philoſophers, as well Heathen as Chriſtian, that

humane Souls owe their origine to God, and with almoſt all Philoſophers, (for I know what the *Stoicks* held) that as he is the ſupreme Being, ſo he is a moſt free Agent, I ſee not why, as he has given to Corporeal Beings divers Qualities, very differing in their degrees of Nobleneſs; ſo he might not give to the Intelligent Productions of his Power and Will, various degrees of Intellectual Capacities as well as a limitedneſs of Nature. And as it will not follow, that becauſe we can ſee with our eyes very ſmall Objects, and imagine ſuch as are yet much ſmaller, either the eye, or the imagination can ever reach to ſo ſmall an Object as an Atome; ſo it will not follow that becauſe we are able to frame Conceptions of immaterial Beings, we muſt therefore be able to underſtand the nature of God, and the Harmony of all his Monadical Attributes. A little Boy may have a clear notion of three, four,

five

five, or other ſmaller numbers, and yet may be unable to frame good conceptions of Triangular and other Polygon Numbers (as ſome call them) and much more of the abſtruſe affections of ſurd Numbers, and the Roots of the higher Algebraical Powers. To diſcern particular Truths is one thing, and to be able to diſcover the Intercourſe and Harmony between all Truths, is another thing, and a far more difficult one; as a Traveller may upon the Engliſh Shoar know that he ſees the Ocean, and upon the Coaſt of *Affrick* be made to do the like, and at the *Eaſt Indies* alſo he may know that he ſees the Ocean; and yet not know how thoſe ſo diſtant Seas communicate with each other, tho that may be manifeſt enough to a Coſmographer.

Arnob. What you ſay brings into my mind, that I have ſometimes thought God and men enjoy *Truth*, as differingly as they do *Time*. For we men, as we enjoy time

time but by parcels, and always leave far the greateſt part of it unreach'd to by us; ſo we know but ſome particular Truths, and are always ignorant of far more than we attain to. Whereas God, as his eternity reaches to all the portions of time (or meaſured Durations) ſo his Omniſcience gives him at one view a proſpect of the whole extent of Truth: (As if a man could ſee the whole River of *Nilus* with all its turnings and windings from its hidden Springs to its entrance into the Sea.) Upon which account he ſees all particular Truths, not only *diſtinct*, but *in their Syſteme*, and ſo ſees a Connexion between thoſe that to us ſeem'd the moſt diſtant ones.

Arnob. There remains now, Gentlemen, but one part more of your penance to be undergone; for 'tis high time, I ſhould haſten to the relief of a Patience I have ſo long diſtreſs'd, and therefore I ſhall give it but one exerciſe

exercise more, and conclude your Trouble with some reflections on this last Advice.

The Sixth Advice, or Rule.

That in Privileg'd Things we ought not always to condemn that opinion which is liable to ill Consequences, and incumbred with great inconveniencies, provided the positive proofs of it be sufficient in their kind.

That this Advice may be the more easily admitted, I shall separately suggest three things, which I desire may be afterwards considered all together.

First, that clear positive proofs, proportionate to the nature of things, are genuine and proper motives to induce the understanding to assent to a proposition as true; so that 'tis not always necessary to the evidence and firmness of an Assent, that the Intellect takes notice of the Consequences that may be drawn from it, or the difficulties wherewith

it

it may be incumbered. This is plain in thoſe Aſſents which of all others, at leaſt that are meerly natural, are by knowing men thougt to be the moſt undoubted and the beſt grounded; I mean the Aſſents that are given to the Truth of Geometrical Demonſtrations: And yet, *Euclid*, for inſtance, in all his Elements of Geometry, in ſome of which ſurpriſing Paradoxes are delivered, (as in the ſixteenth propoſition of the third Book, and the 117th of the tenth Book, to name no more) contents himſelf to demonſtrate his Aſſertions in a Mathematical Way, and does not, that I remember, anſwer or take notice of any one Objection: and the Geometricians of our days think they may ſafely receive his Propoſitions upon the Demonſtrations annexed to them, without knowing or troubling themſelves about the ſubtleties employed by the Sceptick *Sextus Empiricus*, or others

of

of that Sect in their writings against the Mathematicians, and all Assertors of assured knowledge.

The second thing I would offer to your consideration, is, that the former part of our Discourse has manifested, that there are some things which our humane and imperfect understandings either cannot, or at least do not, perfectly comprehend: and that nevertheless men have not refrain'd from presuming to dogmatize and frame Notions and Rules about such things, as if they understood them very well. Whence it must needs come to pass, that if they were mistaken (as in things so abstruse, 'tis very like they often were) those that judge by the Rules they laid down, must conceive the Propositions opposite to their mistakes, to be liable to very great, if not insuperable Difficulties and Objections.

And this second Consideration, in conjunction with the first, will make way for the third, as a natural

tural production of them, which is, That, *as* we need not wonder that privileged things, which are wont to be ſo ſublime as to have been out of the view of thoſe that fram'd the Rules whereby we judge of other things, ſhould be thought liable to great Objections by them who judge of all things only by thoſe Rules; *ſo* we ſhould not require or expect more evidence of a Truth relating to ſuch things, than that there are for it ſuch ſufficient poſitive Reaſons, as notwithſtanding Objections and Inconveniences, make it, upon the whole matter, worthy to be embraced.

Pyrocles. But can that be worthy to be aſſented to, which is liable to Objections and Inconveniences, which the maintainers confeſs they know not how to avoid? Does not your *Euclid* himſelf in ſome of his Demonſtrations imploy that way of reaſoning which ſome of his Latine Interpreters call *Deductio ad Abſurdum*?

Arnob.

Arnob. Euclid indeed (as well as other Mathematicians) beſides that more ſatisfactory way of direct probation, which perhaps he might have oftner imployed than he did, has ſometimes where he thought it needful, made uſe of the Απαγωγὴ you ſpeak of. But in theſe caſes he never goes out of the Diſcipline he treats of, and confining himſelf to Arguments drawn from quantity, he urges nothing as abſurd, but what is undeniably repugnant to ſome Truth he had already demonſtrated, or to thoſe clear and undiſputed Definitions, Axioms, or *Poſtulata*, which he ſuppoſes to have been already granted by thoſe he would convince. But tho he thus argues to prove that his Readers cannot contradict him without contradicting themſelves; yet we find not that he was at all ſolicitous to clear thoſe Difficulties that ſo quick-ſighted a man could not but know ſome of his Theorems

to

to be attended with: but contents himſelf to demonſtrate the incommenſurableneſs of the Side and Diagonal of a Square, without troubling himſelf to take notice of the Difficulties that attend the endleſs Diviſibility of a Line, which would follow from what he demonſtrated. But, *Pyrocles*, to look back to the firſt part of your Objection, tho what you ſay will hold in ordinary Caſes, yet ſuch peculiar ones, as we are ſpeaking of, deſerve a particular Conſideration. About ſome privileged things there *are*, and about ſome others there *may be* contradictory Opinions (taking that term in a ſtrict ſenſe) maintain'd. Now as both of theſe cannot be true, ſo one of them muſt be ſo: as, tho it be hotly diſputed whether Quantity be endleſly diviſible, yet certainly it either muſt, or muſt not be diviſible without end: And as was formerly obſerved which ſide ſoever you take, the Inconveniencies will

will be exceeding great, and perhaps there will lye Objections ſcarce to be *directly* anſwered. And ſince one of the two oppoſite Opinions muſt be true, it will not always be neceſſary, that an opinion muſt be falſe, which is incumbred with great difficulties, or liable to puzzling Objections. And therefore if the poſitive proofs on one ſide be clear and cogent, tho there be perplexing Difficulties objected by the other; the truth ought not for their ſake to be rejected; becauſe ſuch difficulties proceeding uſually either from notions that men preſume to frame about things above their reaches, or from Rules that were not made for ſuch points as are in diſpute, the Objections are not to be judged ſo well founded, as is that acknowledged Principle in Reaſoning, that *from Truth, nothing but truth can be legitimately inferr'd.*

Eugen. I confeſs I have always thought it reaſonable in ſuch Ca-

ſes to compare, as well the *poſitive proofs* of one opinion with thoſe of the other, as thoſe *Objections* that are urg'd on either ſide; and there make my eſtimate upon the whole matter; tho with a peculiar regard to that opinion that has a great advantage in point of poſitive Arguments; Becauſe, as *Arnobius* obſerv'd, thoſe are the proper Inducements to the Aſſent of the Intellect: And then the Objections may well enough be ſuſpected to proceed from the abſtruſe nature of privileg'd things, and the over-great narrowneſs of the Rules that men are wont to judge of all things by. For we may have a ſufficiently clear proof *that* a thing is, whilſt we have no ſatisfactory conception of its *manner* of exiſting or operating; our illative knowledge, if you will allow me ſo to ſpeak, being clearer, and extending further than our intuitive or apprehenſive knowledge.

Arnob.

Arnob. But even about things that we cannot ſufficiently underſtand, we may in ſome caſes exerciſe our Reaſon, in anſwering objections that are thought not to be *at all* anſwerable, becauſe they are not *directly* ſo. For we may ſometimes ſhew, by framing in another caſe a like Argument, which, the Adverſary muſt confeſs, does not conclude well, that neither does the Argument that contains his Objection conclude aright.

This I could exemplifie (tho that may ſeem no eaſie Task) but that I fear I ſhould want time to propoſe Examples, whoſe being very paradoxical would make them need much proof; which you who I fear are quite tired already, would want patience to hear. Wherefore I ſhall rather recommend to you one Obſervation, which I take to be of no ſmall moment and uſe, when we contemplate things of the nature of thoſe we have been diſcourſing of:

of: and it is this, that we muſt not expect to be able, as to privileg'd things, and the Propoſitions that may be fram'd about them, to reſolve all Difficulties, and anſwer all Objections; ſince we can never directly anſwer thoſe, which require for their ſolution a perfect comprehenſion of what is infinite: as a man cannot well anſwer the Objections that may be made againſt the *Antipodes*, the Doctrine of Eclipſes, that of the different *Phaſes* of the Moon, and of the long days and nights of ſome months apiece, near the Poles, (not now to name that more abſtruſe part of Aſtronomy, the Theory of the Planets) unleſs he underſtand the nature of the Sphere, and ſome other Principles of Coſmography.

FINIS.